

Cult

I have been told that because I am now pursuing a Messianic walk that I have joined a cult. How do I counter these claims?

It is not uncommon for people who enter into the Messianic movement to be accused of joining a “cult.” This is often done by Christian family or friends who do not understand what the Messianic movement and/or Torah observance are about. Rather than investigate the Hebraic Roots of our faith, many decide to accuse those who have done so as being part of a “cult,” when in actuality such a claim is made with no substantial basis other than complete misunderstanding and lack of knowledge.

Technically speaking, any group that is dedicated to any cause is a “cult.” *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus* defines the word cult as “devoted attachment to person, principle, etc.,” which would include religious or social devotion to anything. It could include those who are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, or are dedicated to entertainment phenomena such as Star Trek or Elvis Presley. Just about everyone on Planet Earth is part of some kind of “cult,” when this definition is applied.

Theologically speaking, however, a cult is a group which advocates aberrant theology which is clearly in violation of the Scriptures. The term cult is often used more frequently than it should, but when correctly applied it should be applied to groups that deny core essentials of the faith such as denial of the Divinity and/or Messiahship of Yeshua, the inspiration of Scripture, and salvation by grace through faith alone. If any one of these three areas is violated by a group, be they Messianic or Christian, then such a group may be rightfully considered a cult. A cult also may be defined as a group with a domineering leader who demands the complete loyalty of that group’s members, and who says that his teachings may not be challenged.

Are there groups claiming to be “Messianic” that classify as being “cults”? Yes. But in complete fairness there are “Christian” groups which likewise fall into the same classification. If you are challenged as being part of a cult, please ask the person making the accusation on what specific theological reasons and what significant basis that the claim is being made.