

## The Unlikely Success of Christianity

On Pentecost three thousand obeyed the gospel. Shortly after that five thousand men had obeyed the gospel, not counting the women. Then hundreds of thousands, then millions. This was accomplished under difficult circumstances. Trial and persecution were on every hand. Add to this the doctrine of Christianity which was taught by the apostles and others. It was a doctrine that seemingly, in no way, would be likely to command success. Think about what was taught:

1. Christianity condemned all other religions, some hundreds and maybe thousands of years old. Talk about something being "politically incorrect"! But Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn. 14:6. cf. Acts 17:22-31).
2. Christianity taught that men had to put to death the flesh, and the lusts of the flesh (Col. 3:5; I Jn. 2:15-17).
3. Christianity taught that we must love our enemies (Mt. 5:43-47). This is really hard to do.
4. Christianity taught that we would have to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Jesus (Mt. 16:24). This is to be done everyday – no breaks or vacations (Luke 9:23).
5. Christianity tells us that the ultimate reward for which we live, and that Christianity guarantees, cannot be obtained until after we are dead (Rev. 2:10).
6. Christianity promises that the one who lives faithfully will be guaranteed to suffer persecution in this life (II Tim. 3:12). Christian living will present problems to any Christian. There are things I cannot say, places I cannot go, and things I cannot do.

What a teaching! How unlikely for such a teaching to have success!

Yet, (during the centuries of Christianity) millions have become Christians, and lived faithfully all of their lives. They know what the eternal worth of such a life is. They know that the reward of Christian living will be worth more than the eternal punishment of ungodliness. It takes real men and women to meet such a challenge. What about you?