

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

WDXE – January 22, 2012

Almost 2,000 years ago Christianity came into the world. Is it possible to reproduce that early Christianity in the modern world? If it were possible would it be necessary?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

Christianity is CHRIST-anity. It is the religion that Jesus Christ brought into the world. However, Jesus was not the only one who talked about Christianity. The prophets of Israel predicted the coming of the Christ centuries before he came. Those old prophets described Christ's coming and they described the kingdom that Christ would bring with him.

The old prophet Isaiah predicted many things about Jesus Christ. Isaiah wrote that the Christ would be born of a virgin over 700 years before Christ was born of a virgin. He wrote, "the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The name "Immanuel" means "God with us." (Isaiah 7:14.) Isaiah saw the coming of the Christ to Galilee in Palestine. Isaiah said that in former years God brought contempt upon the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, "but in the latter time, he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness, on them has light shined." (Isaiah 9:1, 2.) Then in Verse 6, Isaiah explained, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Might God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah went on to predict that "the increase of his government and of peace" would not end, "on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." (Isaiah 9:6, 7.)

Not only did Isaiah predict the coming of Christ but he also predicted the death of Christ and what it would mean to the world. Isaiah heard God call Jesus "my servant." Isaiah heard God say, "my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted." (Isaiah 52:14.) Jesus was "exalted", but only **after**

his crucifixion and resurrection. Isaiah described Jesus' crucifixion in chapter 53 and the reason that he was crucified. "He [Jesus] was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah says that Jesus "was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so [Jesus] opened not his mouth." Isaiah also said this about Jesus: "... he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; [God] has put [Jesus] to grief..." Isaiah heard God make a promise: "...when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring [this means Jesus shall see his followers; Jesus will see the effect of his sacrifice];" [God said to Isaiah] "he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:3-12 ESV.) This whole chapter in Isaiah explains what the crucifixion of Christ means to the people who will put their trust in Him. It is even as John the apostle said In John 12:41, "Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him."

Yes, in the days of Isaiah, 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, and even in the days of Abraham, 1500 years before Christ, God was preparing a "lamb" that would take away the sin of the world. Even Abraham had predicted that God would provide a lamb. Abraham told Isaac his son that "God will provide himself a lamb." (Genesis 22:8.)

One day John the Baptizer looked up and saw Jesus walking towards him and John said to those around him, "Look, the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29.)

Not only was God preparing a sacrificial “lamb” for the sins of the world, God was also preparing in Jesus Christ a High Priest who could administer the blood of the new covenant that God would make with the world. That’s right!

King David, who lived one thousand years before Christ was born, was an inspired man. Through David’s inspiration God provided the ancient Israelites and the world today insight into a conversation that God had with His Son. David overheard this conversation and he wrote it down in a song that we call Psalm 110. David wrote, “The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at my right side, until I make your enemies into a footstool for you.” There are two Lords in this conversation. The first Lord says to the second Lord, “Sit at my right side, until I make your enemies into a footstool for you.” (Psalm 110:1 CEV.) Down in verse 4 of the song, David said he heard God make a promise that would never be broken, “You will be a priest forever, just like Melchizedek.” God wasn’t speaking with David; God was speaking with his Son, David’s Lord. God promised that He would make Jesus Christ, a priest forever.

Melchizedek had been a priest of the Most High God, and a king of Salem in the ancient land of Caanan. Melchizedek lived in the days of Abraham and knew Abraham. In fact, Abraham paid Melchizedek tithes on one occasion. Jesus Christ is a priest today after the order of Melchizedek, that is, Jesus is not a Jewish priest but a priest for all mankind of every generation. In this role, Jesus took His own blood, without spot or blemish, and entered into the throne of His Heavenly Father.

The book of Hebrews in the New Testament describes what happened when Jesus went back to God. The writer says in Hebrews 10:4, “it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (5) So when Christ came into the world he said, “You don't want sacrifices and offerings, but you have prepared a body for me. (6) You are not pleased with the sacrifices of animals killed and burned or with offerings to take away sins. (7) Then I said, 'Here I am, God. It is written about me in the book of the law. I have come to do what you want.'” (8) Christ first said, “You don't want sacrifices and offerings. You are not pleased with animals killed and burned or with sacrifices to take away sin.” (These are all sacrifices that the law commands.) (9) Then he said, “Here I am, God. I have come to do what you want.” So God ends that first system of sacrifices and starts his new way. (10) Jesus Christ did the things God wanted him to do. And because

of that, we [who are Christians] are made holy through the sacrifice of Christ's body. Christ made that sacrifice one time--enough for all time.... (12) But Christ offered only one sacrifice for sins, and that sacrifice is good for all time. Then he sat down at the right side of God. (13) And now Christ waits there for his enemies to be put under his power. (14) With one sacrifice Christ made his people perfect forever. They are the ones who are being made holy." You can read this whole section in Heb 10:4-14 (ERV).

The Hebrew writer then quotes again from the Old Testament when he writes: "This is the agreement I will make with my people in the future, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts. I will write my laws in their minds." (17) Then he says, "I will forget their sins and never again remember the evil they have done." (18) And after everything is forgiven, there is no more need for a sacrifice to pay for sins. (19) And so, brothers and sisters, we are completely free to enter the Most Holy Place. We can do this without fear because of the blood sacrifice of Jesus. (20) We enter through a new way that Jesus opened for us. It is a living way that leads through the curtain--Christ's body. (21) And we have a great priest who rules the house of God. (22) Sprinkled with the blood of Christ, our hearts have been made free from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. So come near to God with a sincere heart, full of confidence because of our faith in Christ." (Heb 10:16-22 ERV.)

Is it possible to be just a Christian like those people who first heard the good news of Christ? Yes, friends, it is possible. It is possible to practice Christianity just like those early Christians. And we will experience the same benefits. The blood of Christ was shed for you and me, just as surely as the blood of Christ was shed for the people of the first century and every century.

But friend, if you continue to keep on sinning after you have learned and obeyed the truth of Jesus Christ, then all that is left for you is a fearful waiting for judgment and the angry fire that will ruin those who live against God. You see, there is no other sacrifice that will take away your sins. Since it is possible to be free from sin by the blood of Christ, is it really worth your time and allegiance? Is it necessary that you become a Christian? Given the testimony of God are you ready to say that Christianity is worthless? Surely, friend, you want to be saved.

Visit a church of Christ near you today. Learn more about what you need to do to be eternally saved by the blood of Christ.