

Expository Files

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Tell Us Again, Rufus, About Your Dad

By Jon W. Quinn

There are several Simons in the Bible. Do you remember who Simon of Cyrene is? He was passing by when a group of Roman soldiers pressed him into service. Luke's gospel records "When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus." (Luke 23:26).

How do you think Simon felt about this? Did he know at all what was going on? Did he believe that Jesus was a prophet of God? What became of him in the future? We do not know a lot about that, but consider something with me that we do know.

Simon was the father of two sons. Mark's gospel adds this fact: "They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross" (Mark 15:21).

Perhaps Simon was in Jerusalem for the Passover. We know that for the following Pentecost there were visitors from all over the known world gathered together in Jerusalem to celebrate the festival. This included "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes..." (Acts 2:10). Mark's gospel seems primarily directed at Gentiles, and specifically Romans.

There was probably a reason that Mark mentioned the names of the two sons of Simon in his gospel. The names evidently meant something to the Roman Christians at the time the gospel was written. In fact, in Paul's letter to the church at Rome he sends personal

greetings to the brethren there mentioning many of them by name. Among those he mentioned was Rufus: "Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine" (Roman 16:13).

But note again Mark's account. This explains why Mark mentions the sons' names in a gospel he is writing to brethren a continent away. One of Simon's sons, a half a generation later, is a member of the Lord's church there. I wonder how many times Rufus had heard his father tell the story of the day the Roman soldiers forced him into labor on the road leading out of Jerusalem? And how often had he repeated to others the things he had heard about his father's personal experience on that darkest of all Friday mornings.

At any rate, these were people that could be talked to. These were people who had actually witnessed the things we're told in the gospels. This is not a made up tale. Ask Rufus' father.

Walking Cain

"...you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

(Genesis 4:1-13)

By Jon W. Quinn

"When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is too great to bear!'" (Genesis 4:12-13).

How had it come to this? Things had escalated way out of control. Once the problems could have been easily corrected but now things would never be the same.

Life often turns out like that when we try to correct one mistake by making another. It never makes things better.

God had taken great interest in helping Cain, but He had no interest in making Cain's decisions for him. He had pointed Cain in the right direction but Cain was free to chose his own course. It remains so with us today.

The Initial Problem

"So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their

fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.” (Genesis 4:3-5a).

It had not been by some arbitrary choice that God had found Abel's offering acceptable but rejected the offering of Cain. The Genesis account does not go into detail at all as to why the Lord “had no regard” for Cain and his offering, but other Scripture sheds a little more light on why there was a problem.

Abel's sacrifice was better than Cain's because Abel offered his “by faith” (Hebrews 11:4). That is what made his worship acceptable unto God. The implication we make is that Cain's offering was rejected because it was not offered “by faith”.

There are several possibilities as to why Cain's offering was not “by faith” and as far as I know we are not told exactly why.

It could be that God had commanded an animal sacrifice of worshippers but Cain had offered of the fruit of the ground while Abel offered an animal sacrifice. But we're not sure what the Lord had commanded as an offering at that time and know that later, under the Old Law, He commanded both kinds; animal offerings as well as grain offerings.

It could also be Cain's attitude as he worshipped. Perhaps he was going through the motions but without conviction. That would be something like partaking of the Lord's Supper without conviction. Such worship is not acceptable in any time because it is not by faith.

Cain's Anger

“... but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?’” (Genesis 4:5-6).

Cain became angry that God had rejected his worship while accepting his brother's. The New Testament has this to say about anger: “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” (James 1:19-20).

It was time for Cain to listen carefully, but he wasn't really in the mood to listen. Unless he becomes willing to hear the counsel of the Lord he will continue heading the wrong way until disaster results.

Harboring anger brings bitterness and resentment. Often people will vent this anger toward people who are seeking to please the Lord. The world often reacts with viciousness against those seeking to live righteously by faith. Seldom do angry men stop to ask themselves the real reasons behind their anger toward God and His people.

God Reasons With Cain

“Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." (Genesis 4:6,7).

God was not through with Cain. With great patience He counseled and encouraged Cain to do the right thing. He was gentle with Cain as He warned of the danger of continuing his present course. This is the same God that we serve today, who calls the world to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Cain did not deserve this grace. He was angry without good reason after having spoiled his own offering by his own lack of faith. The problem was not the Lord's, nor was it Abel's. It was his own, and he would have to be the one to correct it.

That, too, is not unlike our own situations. If we harbor ill feelings and sinful attitudes in our hearts, dwelling on them in our imaginations we will also find bitterness result. We will find ourselves in opposition to what is true and righteous every time. “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.” (James 3:14).

Disaster and Aftermath

“Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.'” (Genesis 4:8-10).

Of course, God did not need the confession of Cain concerning what had happened to his brother. The statement “The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground” is very thought-provoking. If the blood of Abel is crying up to God, then we must ask, “What is it saying?” Is it calling for justice? For vengeance? Is it expressing its sorrow? I do not suppose we really know.

But we do know this. Abel's was not the last innocent blood to be shed. There would be others (Matthew 23:35). But let us now focus on one particular event where blood was shed and cries up unto God. “...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:24).

Jesus' blood, we know, does not call out for vengeance. It calls out for mercy and forgiveness. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our

trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 1:7). That is better than the blood of Abel could do.

As far as we know, God never spoke directly to Cain again after assigning his punishment (Genesis 4:11-16). It could have turned out so much differently; so much better. Those who live as Cain lived will also one day hear a final word from God as they enter into judgment. Again, it can turn out so much better for us. Will we listen to what God has told us? Will we allow the blood of His Son to speak for us?

She Will Bear a Son

(Matthew 1:21)

By Karl Hennecke

*“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”
Matthew 1:21*

When Mary was found with child the Lord appeared to Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, and gave him this message. The angel explained that the child in Mary’s womb was conceived in her of the Holy Spirit and that he should not be afraid to take her as his wife. In this simple statement to Joseph the angel revealed God’s plan for His Son and the redemption of mankind in His name.

“She will bear a Son.” In the days before ultra-sound imaging it was impossible for one to know the sex of a child before birth. The infant in Mary was a baby boy as the Lord had promised her (Luke 1:31). No man could have known this for certainty although we might say they had a fifty-fifty chance. This was the child of promise, the “Seed” in the promise to Abraham by which all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:16).

“You shall call His name Jesus.” This same message was given to mother Mary (Luke 1:31). The name “Jesus” is derived from the verb, “to save.” In the Hebrew it is the same as Joshua. It was a very common name among the Jews. The name is made up of two parts. The first is the expression for God, ‘Yahweh,’ and the second means “to deliver”. It means “God will deliver.” It means He is the Savior. Jesus had another name as well and that was Immanuel, which translated means “God with us.” The giving of this name was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah given about 700 years before the birth of this child to a virgin

(Isaiah 7:14). There is no single name that will suffice to describe Jesus and there are many descriptive terms that are applied to Him.

“For He shall save His people.” This is the reason for the giving of the name as we explained above. A high ranking official will often times refer to those who surround him on a daily basis and serve his needs, as “his people.” God had a people in the Old Testament. These people were the chosen people. It certainly was an honor to be chosen, but more importantly it meant that they existed to serve Him. When they refused to serve God, they lost the honor. Who were the people, whom the angel was referring to when said these words to Joseph? In John 6:37 Jesus said, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” The people of Jesus are those who “behold(s) the Son and believes in Him” (John 6:40). They are the people who will be raised up to eternal life in the last day (John 6:39, 40). His people are those people who are saved. He cannot save those people who do not come to Him. He cannot save those people who do not believe in Him. The Father has not given the unbelieving to be His people but the believing.

He shall save His people “from their sins.” This is the reason that Jesus came. Albert Barnes wrote, “It was not to save them in their sins but to save them from their sins.” There is no greater work than to bring the lost to Jesus so that He can save them. Materialistic pursuits and a “gospel” that is designed to satisfy physical longings do nothing about sin.

For His part the sinless Jesus died on the cross to redeem us from sin. “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53:11). On our part we must believe and obey Him to become “His people.”

“Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him”

Psalm 2

Warren E. Berkley

We share a deep concern about a lot of things happening in our time. I see evidence of this every day when I open my email inbox. Emails make the rounds daily sounding various alarms, some reaching the doomsday level. I understand the fear but I’m not overwhelmed

or in despair. Because – as a believer – I know how everything will turn out. And I know God is in control. And I know . . .

Men, however powerful and rebellious and to whatever extent they engage in wickedness, CANNOT DEFEAT GOD. They can refuse to embrace His promises, but cannot take us away from Him or deny us His grace. Don't worry about God being defeated or heaven be conquered by hell. Here's one place where this is clear.

- ¹ Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
- ² The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,
- ³ “Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”
- ⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
- ⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
- ⁶ “Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”
- ⁷ “I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
- ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
- ⁹ You shall [⚔]break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
- ¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
- ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
- ¹² [⚔]Kiss the Son, lest [⚔]He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2 (New King James)

Four scenes come to our attention.

The first is rebellion on earth. Here are men making their silly plans to defeat God. It is one thing for people to live their lives without any concern about God; not caring . . . that's bad enough. But this goes beyond ignoring God; this is **men plotting, planning and thinking in vain they can defeat God.**

The language here is dynamic: “The nations rage...” “The people plot a vain thing...” “The kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and against His Anointed.”

Out of this vain counsel the writer tells us what men had decided, in verse 3: “Let us break Their bonds apart and cast away Their cords from us.” This conveys their rebellion against the Godhead.

It would be like men today coming together in some sort of counsel, and they write in the minutes of their meeting – **Resolved, we will not tolerate God. We will defeat the cause of Christ.** The first scene in Psalm 2 is one of repulsive rebellion against God and against Christ.

There are many examples of this in the Bible. The men who conspired against God's will, and built the Tower of Babel; The Egyptian regime, refusing to let God's people go; The empires of Assyria and Babylon; Then, the scribes and Pharisees who executed our Lord. In each case: men plotting against Deity.

I am persuaded – there are men today doing what these men did. There are books in circulation today like this:

- **The Case Against God**, by George H. Smith.

- **The God Delusion**, by Richard Dawkins.

- **God Is Not Great**, by Christopher Hitchens.

There are movies like **The Golden Compass**. Messages placed on Starbucks coffee cups like this, “**Why would you ask God for help . . . He is a figment of your imagination!**” And it may well be – on deeper levels, beyond our vision and knowledge – men and women plot vain things against God.

Consider God’s response; this is the second scene:

- ² The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,
- ³ “Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”
- ⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.

God has never been intimidated by the threats of men. You cannot threaten God into backing away or going away. You cannot scare Him into changing His plans.

Know this! God is not only not moved from His purpose by the vain plots of men . . .

“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.” Men have no chance of any success, in their plots against God. God is not worried.

His purpose is never thwarted by men. He responds like this (v.6): “Yet, I have set my King on My holy hill of Zion.” God wasn’t discouraged by the vain plots of men.

With reference to the Kingdom of Christ, God would do what He planned. We believe God did do what He planned. Christ came and after His death, He was raised and ascended to the right hand of God.

God’s plan to send His Son and anoint His Son as King of Kings **was not adjusted, changed or defeated by the vain plots of men.** In fact, the next (3rd) scene is . . .

David’s portrayal of God carrying out His plan and Christ is exalted to His throne.

- ⁷ “I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
- ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
- ⁹ You shall ⁴break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

David speaks here, but He speaks prophetically – on behalf of the **One who would occupy the throne forever**. We know God said to Christ, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.” We know God gave to Christ, the rule, the throne, “the nations for” an “inheritance,” and “the ends of the earth” for His possession. For us these are past historical events with present and future blessings for penitent believers.

We see Christ here, ruling – using the rod of iron to break the rebellious, dashing them to pieces like a potter’s vessel. The throne of David would be forever occupied by Christ. As written by Daniel, by Isaiah and Ezekiel. This is Christ on His heavenly throne, written by David in the 2nd Psalm.

Everything here points to the establishment of that kingdom we are now citizens of if we have obeyed the gospel.

This is more than just distinction conferred upon Christ; this goes beyond simple recognition or approval. It is the truth that all are subject of Christ; He reigns; He rules; He has obtained a more excellent name.

Our only hope, is to put our lives under His Rule. Men fought with all their heart against God and His Anointed but their plots were in vain.

The Fourth Scene: **An Invitation To All**

- ¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
- ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
- ¹² [Ⓢ]Kiss the Son, lest [Ⓢ]He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Wise men obey Him! Wise kings rule, aware of God’s
sovereignty and Christ’s authority. Our only hope is, serving the Lord with fear.

Conclusion: Christ Rules Now!

He has absolute dominion over the whole human race. Our lives find good purpose, only in submission to Him. He is the King in Zion, promised by God, the head of the church – the only Savior.

Rulers, Dictators and Terrorists stand defeated.

It may appear they enjoy victory, but that's only a temporary perception. They cannot win!! Their only redemption is to repent; to serve the Lord with fear and to kiss the hand of the One they now hate.

And so: "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."

“He Must Increase, But I Must Decrease”

(Jno. 3:30)

Jacob Hudgins

The water coolers of the ancient world were abuzz. “Have you heard about that crazy desert preacher?” “I hear he lives on bugs!” “I hear he called the Pharisees a brood of vipers!” “Do you think it could be the prophet—or Elijah resurrected?” John the Baptist caused quite a stir in his time, and developed quite a following. His preaching was startling, convicting, passionate. Even Jesus said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist*”(Matt 11:11).

Yet since John's mission was to go before Jesus and prepare the way for Him (Mark 1:2-3), the time came when John needed to fade into the background of the Bible story and allow Jesus His place. It is with considerable grace and humility that John says, “*He must increase, but I must decrease*”(John 3:30). What can we learn from this statement?

First, permanent inferiority is OK! John always was, and forever will be, inferior to Jesus—and he was perfectly comfortable with this! With all his notoriety, John never deviated from this simple message: “*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*”(Matt 3:11). John had no pretensions of greater glory than the coming Christ. The Pharisees sent a list of questions to John—whether he was the prophet, or the Christ, or Elijah resurrected—and John never rashly agreed to any inaccurate designation (John 1:19-26). John knew who he was—and that he was inferior to Jesus—and that didn't bother him. Instead, “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” reflects a mindset of complete

humility in the face of one greater. It is OK for us to not be first, most popular, best looking, most intelligent, or most notable—even permanently!

John shows us that passing the torch is natural—yet still requires humility. “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” is the thought of each passing generation of God’s leaders who are looking to the future of Christ’s cause. It was the thought of Moses preparing Joshua, and David preparing Solomon, and Paul preparing Timothy and Titus. Yet we should never think that the need for a new generation to take the reins of leadership in God’s work means that relinquishing those reins is easy for a generation accustomed to them! We desperately need the humility to say that we are not as important as the fate of a local church, or the development of leaders in worship and preaching, or the confidence of young believers. Let us promote and encourage them, acknowledging that they must increase, and I must decrease.

John reminds us that the gospel is more important than any one person. Surely his followers warned him to be quiet about Herod’s adulterous marriage (Matt 14:4) so that he could stay out of trouble and keep preaching—yet the gospel was more important than what happened to John. Further, consider what might have happened had John not stepped aside for Jesus—a power struggle, competing teachers and disciples, and a prevention of many disciples from coming to Jesus. Yet John ceding to Jesus allowed Jesus to say, “*Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*”(Matt 11:11). The gospel can make us greater than we could ever be on our own—and John’s stepping aside allowed that gospel to come in its full power. We may advance the gospel, or detract from its advance—yet it remains far bigger than we are! We must guard against an inflated sense of self in spiritual matters!

“*He must increase, but I must decrease*” is a distillation of a humble heart. Are we pursuing this humility?

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How Does One Become a “Christian”?

When “almost persuaded” becomes “completely persuaded”

Topical Article

By Jon W. Quinn

This is a basic article on a basic topic. It may be that almost all who will read this article already know these things. However, it is good to review them from time to time since we are constantly associated with people who are unfamiliar with what the word of God says about how to become a Christian. We need to be prepared to communicate these things to others in a convincing and appropriate way.

But you may also find some things herein that you have not considered before; perhaps in the way a passage is related to the topic. And if you are not a Christian, please consider these things carefully.

The Question

In A.D. 59, the apostle Paul, a prisoner of the Roman government, was given an opportunity to speak in his own defense before the Roman procurator Porcius Festus, the Jewish king Herod Agrippa II, and Agrippa's sister Bernice (Acts 24:27-26:32).

Following Paul's speech, Agrippa replied, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian” (Acts 26:24-19). The New Testament manuscripts use the word “Christian” three times: here in Acts 26:28 and also in Acts 11:26 and 1 Peter 4:16. In each case, it is obvious that the word is used with reference to a follower of Jesus Christ. In this study, we are asking the question: how does one become a Christian? If Agrippa had been completely persuaded to become a Christian, if he had said what he should have said that day, “Paul, you have convinced me. You have persuaded me to become a Christian.” - what would Paul have instructed him to do to become one?

An Answer

The most often-heard answer to this or similar questions is that one simply needs to open his heart and accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. The New Testament certainly does speak of “receiving” Jesus Christ. We are told “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,” (Colossians 2:6). But how is this done? Are any specific actions to “receive Christ” required other than the mere mental act of believing in Jesus Christ?

This question is important because Jesus Himself said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). What is entailed in this "Do the will of My Father who is in Heaven"? Certainly "receiving Christ" would entail doing as He said to do.

The New Testament often speaks of concepts such as "obedience to (or of) the faith" - (Romans 1:5; 16:26). It speaks of "obeying the truth" (Romans 2:8; 1 Peter 1:22) and "obeying the gospel" (Romans 10:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8) and "obeying the doctrine" (Romans 6:17). It would seem that any answer to our question "How does one become a Christian?" which avoids this part of the answer is inadequate.

Synonyms

There are many different ways to say a thing, and this includes different ways of expressing the idea of "becoming a Christian." For example, I would be saying essentially the same thing if I talked about how one becomes "a disciple of the Lord." In fact, the Bible says that the word "Christian" was used simply to denote people who were "disciples" of Jesus (recall Acts 11:26).

We could express the same thing by talking about obeying the gospel. When one is taught the gospel, believes it, and is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he becomes a disciple. That is how the Jesus told His apostles that disciples are made—"go therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:18-20).

This is also how it is said in the Scriptures that one "calls on the name of the Lord." Jesus had said it is not a matter of just saying "Lord, Lord!" He had said it entailed "doing the will of My Father who is in heaven." One 'calls upon the name of the Lord' by His seeking, trusting obedience to the gospel of grace. (Acts 2:21; 37-38; 22:16).

Christian, Disciple, Saved

Since these terms are applied to the same people in the Scripture, we can know that you become a Christian the same way you become a disciple. You become a disciple the same way you become a saved individual. You become saved the same way you become a Christian. That simplifies things a lot, doesn't it?

God has placed certain conditions on receiving the forgiveness of sins. The Scriptures say, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation," (Hebrews 5:8-9). We see the condition stated in this verse. Jesus saves those who obey Him!

Our God, by His grace and because of His love for us, has done all that was necessary for Him to do to make the forgiveness of sins possible. We must accept the terms of God's pardon in order to receive from His hand the benefits available in Christ. We must respond to His grace by faith.

This does not mean that we earn or deserve salvation by accepting the conditions of forgiveness. It merely means we put our faith in His grace as we "call on the name of the Lord." Forgiveness is indeed a gift of grace, but it is a conditional gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8).

New Testament Examples of People Becoming Christians

Keeping in mind that becoming a Christian and becoming a disciple and becoming a saved individual are synonymous concepts all referring to becoming the same thing, how did people become Christians in the New Testament? In fact, God's Book gives us many examples of people doing that very thing.

1. Those in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost - (Acts 2:1-47; note especially 36-47).
2. The Samaritans - (Acts 8:12).
3. The Ethiopian treasurer - (Acts 8:36-39).
4. Saul of Tarsus - (Acts 22:1-16).
5. Cornelius and his household - (Acts 10:47,48).
6. Lydia and her household - (Acts 16:14,15).
7. The Philippian jailer and his household - (Acts 16:32,33).
8. Crispus and his household - (Acts 18:7,8).

Conclusion

What causes a person to want to become a Christian? The word of God will do that for a person who will accept it (Romans 1:16; 10:17). When one hears the word and believes it, he then is in a position to become a child of God, a Christian - As it was, Agrippa was "almost" persuaded to become a Christian - but it would have been far better for him to have been completely persuaded, and that goes for you and me and everyone we know.

Plan of Salvation

By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 2:36-38).

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinner were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

The Final Page 16.12

By Warren E. Berkley

The BBQ Preacher

Did I ever tell you about the preacher – can't call his name – who had a big BBQ at his place? It became a powerful object lesson.



On a Thursday night he had a big BBQ at his house and invited everybody in the church. Immediately when the invitations went out, he got a good response. People called and said, “what can I bring?” Some called and said, “can I bring a relative or friend?” People called wanting directions. And when the time came on that Thursday night, everybody was there – on time – excited . . . hungry, helpful. It was an occasion of some kind of joy.

The preacher called on someone to thank God for the food and folks lined up with their empty plates, ate with enthusiasm, came back for seconds . . . cherry cobbler and ice cream topped it off. But the party wasn't over.

The preacher wanted to say something. He brought everybody together (the kids were brought under control) and everybody expected the preacher to say something like, “We thank you all for coming and hope you had a great time.”

He said a little more than that. You see, there were over 50 people at this Thursday night BBQ.

The preacher said to the crowd – “We thank you all for coming and hope you had a great time....”

“I just want to know where all of you were last night at Wednesday night Bible study! We had 18 present!!” SILENCE. And you could see a few heads falling.

The BBQ Preacher wasn't finished. He began to put people on the spot. He said to one of the brethren who still had BBQ sauce all over his shirt, **“We missed you at Bible study last night. We had much more valuable food than what we had tonight.”**

He turned to a young couple and said, **“Last night, we hoped we would see you at Bible Study; we feasted on God's Word. And we had a Bible class ready for your children.”**

He paused a long while to let them “digest” all this. He said to the people: **“If you can assemble for BBQ, why can’t you assemble to worship God and study His Word??”** By this time, some were in tears and shame. They knew the problem. There was no answer.

Several went home with a belly ache, but the BBQ preacher promoted people to re-examine their priorities.