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Have You Considered Jesus?

John Allen Chalk

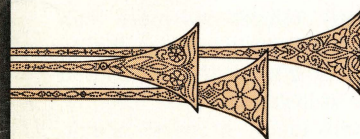
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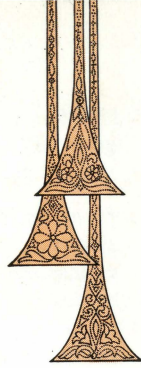
Have You Considered Jesus?



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Have You Considered Jesus?

The American college campus has become the focus of new interest in religion. Contrary to popular opinion, most of today's college students are asking deeply serious questions about life and death, meaning and purpose. During the last school year at the University of Rochester more than one thousand students petitioned university officials for more courses in religion. A survey on a big city college campus recently showed that sixty-seven percent of all students surveyed had discussed religion during the past week. In fact, sixty-one percent of the students interviewed admitted to being either deeply or moderately religious. One of the most significant results of this interview, however, revealed that only two percent of these students discussed religion with a preacher or other religious figure. (Sweetwater (Texas) *Newspress*, February 3, 1967)

At least ten universities and colleges had more than one thousand students enrolled in religion courses during the 1965-1966 school year. Out of a total of one hundred thirty thousand students in nine colleges surveyed recently, more than thirteen thousand were taking a course in religion. One close observer of this campus and student interest in religion has called it "the quiet revolution" (p. 368, Robert Michaelsen, "Religion and Academia," *Theological Education*, Spring, 1967). This same authority concluded:

"What we are seeing is evidence of the interest of a bright, generally serious-minded, and sometimes deeply troubled student generation" (p. 369, *ibid.*).

If you have spent any time on the college and university campuses, as I have in recent months, you know how concerned most college students are about morality and meaning, war and drugs, and other serious issues facing modern man. Here is an example of what I mean: a poll of the one thousand, one hundred and ninety-two students in religion courses at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the University of Iowa revealed that their most prominent reason for enrollment in these courses was a "search for meaning in life." Somehow I can't complain about a generation that believes there is more to life than watching the ten o'clock newscast over a well-fed body and a bowl of ice cream.

Here's another example of this student interest: the Berkeley faculty report that followed demonstrations there last year said: "Rather than aiming to be successful men in an achievement-oriented society, they want to lead lives less tied to financial returns than to social witness and responsibility" (p. 12, quoted by Ronald E. Barnes, *Some Problems Facing Higher Education*).

These are some of the reasons that I believe I'm talking today to serious-minded, spiritually-concerned young adults on our college and university campuses. Many of today's students are honestly searching for truth, for a reason to live, and for ways of expressing human dignity.

Now I want to be just as honest as I hope those of you listening, students and non-students alike, are! First, I believe that God supplies the answers you say you want, and I believe you want. In the words of the author of the New Testament *Epistle to the Hebrews*, "God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Hebrews 1:1,2). Second, I believe that this Jesus Christ through whom God makes Himself, and His will, known to us, offers the only fully satisfying life one can live. In Christ's words, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Third, I am convinced that the college student, for the most part, has either not honestly considered the claims of Christ or has not been given a full, frank presentation of Jesus and His claims. Paul realized how important it was to get the whole story before making a judgment when he said, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not

heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent" (Romans 10:13-15)?

That is why I want to ask every college student, every other honest seeker for truth and meaning listening today, "Have you considered Jesus Christ?" Please carefully note the question. It is not, "Have your parents considered Jesus?" I am not asking, "Have you examined a caricature of Jesus?" I don't want us to answer the question, "What do you think about what others have said about Him?" For once, let's be honest with ourselves and with Jesus, in other words, "Have you considered Jesus Christ?"

First, I want us to look at His life as a story of prophecy and fulfillment. As early as *Genesis*, chapter three, at Adam's fall, a vague but definite promise was made by God when He said to the serpent (the very incarnation of Satan), "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). At some future time, according to this promise, "the seed of woman" would triumph over the power of evil. How strikingly this reminds us of another prophecy hundreds of years later, when Isaiah wrote, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew, the author of the New Testament *Gospel* that bears his name, stated emphatically of this prophecy from Isaiah, "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (Matthew 1:20). The reference here was to the birth of Jesus the Christ!

Just a few chapters later in *Genesis*, another prophecy about the coming of Christ can be seen. God made a covenant with Abraham that included these words, "I will make of thee a great nation. . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). This promise to bless the world through Abraham's seed is repeated in *Genesis*, chapters thirteen, fifteen, and seventeen. Paul clearly teaches, in his New Testament *Epistle to the Galatians* that these promises were all fulfilled in the coming of Jesus into the world. Listen! "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to His seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

Furthermore, we learn early in the Old Testament, at the very beginning of Israel's existence as a distinct nation, that God was to raise up another prophet like Moses at some future time. Listen to God's promise: "I

will raise them (Israel) up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee (Moses); and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command them. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not harken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19). This authoritative prophet whom God would send with His word and from whom no man could turn away with impunity; this prophet, Peter claimed in *Acts* 3:22,23, was none other than Jesus Christ. Peter even went so far as to say to Jews in Jerusalem, "Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days" (Acts 2:24).

In over three hundred specific areas of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection, the Old Testament prophets speak clearly, and more importantly, truthfully about what actually took place. Christ's ministry is described in a beautiful passage by Isaiah (61:1-3), which Jesus Himself, seven hundred years later, read in the synagogue at Nazareth and said, "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus' death for our sins (Isaiah 53:5,6; II Corinthians 5:21); His silence when falsely accused of capital crimes (Isaiah 53:7,8; Matthew 27:12-14; Acts 8:32-35); and His burial in a borrowed tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60) are all specifically described in Old Testament prophecies hundreds of years before we read of their fulfillment in the New Testament, in the life and death of this man called Jesus. And the same degree of clarity and fullness of fulfillment is seen in His resurrection from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:24-31). Our first major emphasis in this lesson today has been that Jesus Christ did not live an obscure and little-known life, only to be rescued from oblivion by some second-century cult. This man's life and all His purposes for living and dying were predicted with absolute accuracy centuries before He appeared.

There's a second thing I want us to consider about Jesus today. This man Jesus is an actual figure of history, a real man who lived as certainly as any one of us. The New Testament *Gospels* were written to provide a valid testimony to Jesus. John states this purpose toward the close of his *Gospel*: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). One well-known modern historian has written of the *Gospels*: "That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic

and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the Gospels: After two centuries of Higher Criticism, the outline of the life, character, and teaching of Christ, remain reasonably clear, and constitute the most fascinating feature of western man." (p. 557, Will Durant, *Story of Civilization*, Vol. III.)

The refusal of many modern scholars and others to believe in the historical Jesus, a real man who lived and was, in fact, the Son of God, sounds extremely irregular in the face of the way pagan unbelievers and avowed enemies of Christianity admitted to His actual existence. The same historian mentioned earlier also observed along this line, "The denial of that existence seems never to have occurred even to the bitterest gentile or Jewish opponents of nascent Christianity" (p. 555, *ibid.*).

None of Christianity's apologists, none of the early preachers of Christ's Gospel, for at least three centuries, felt it necessary to argue the actual existence of Jesus. In fact, the first real attacks on His historical reality only began in the 1700's among a few German scholars who either claimed Him to be the product of "mystical eschatology of the Jews" or a personality formulated by a second-century Christian-Roman-Greek cult (whatever that kind of combination would be). The only conclusion to which any reasonably fair person can come is this: Jesus of Nazareth actually lived at the time indicated in the *Gospels*; the evidence overwhelmingly presents Him as a sane, balanced, deeply committed person who knew His life's purpose and gave Himself fully thereto; He was, as He claimed and demonstrated, God's only begotten son and man's only lasting Savior!

But there's a third observation I want us to consider: His personal ministry compels our respect and attention. He came to serve and die for others (Matthew 20:26-28). He saw men as persons in whose lives God could work healing and provide direction and meaning (John 9). Jesus, you see, had the answer to the student demonstrator with the sign: "I am a number. Please do not fold, staple, or mutilate." Jesus repeatedly confounded His critics and enemies. The Jewish establishment (Matthew 21:23-32), the Temple police (John 7:31,32, 45,46), and the Jewish experts in the Old Testament law (Luke 10:25-37) found themselves, time and again, with no answer to this unusual teacher's penetrating questions and observations. Jesus refused to recognize as genuine the traditional religion of His day and offered brilliant analyses of what was wrong with it (Matthew 5:23). Everything He did and directed His followers to do was pointed toward the betterment of

others' lives (Matthew 10:5-8; Luke 10:1,2, 8-11; Matthew 28:18-20). Above all, He brought man the opportunity to know God when He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

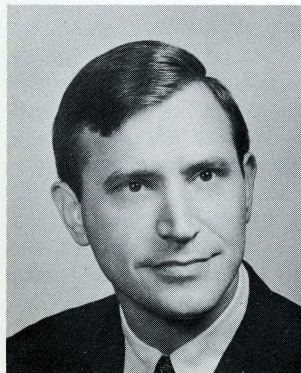
And today, now, this very moment, He calls for our surrender to Him as Lord of our lives. "For to this end (that we might live and die for Him) Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Romans 1:9). As the Lord of our lives, whom we confess and accept (Romans 10:9,10), Jesus gives our lives meaning and direction, a reason or reasons why we must continue living, and living life well.

He invites us to surrender to Him as Savior. He came to save the lost (Luke 19:10) and to "give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). As Savior He reveals God to us and gives us the opportunity of a living, eternal relationship with God.

He invites us to surrender to Him as God. As "the Word" He has been God from all eternity (John 1:1-3). This means that when "the Word became flesh" (as John describes the incarnation) all men were given the opportunity, in seeing and knowing Christ the Word, to behold "the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). On another occasion Jesus stated, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

He invites us to surrender to Him in obedient faith that expresses itself in repentance (Luke 13:3), in public confession of Him as Lord and God (Matthew 10:32,33; Romans 10:9,10), and in baptism which provides the point of contact between man and God (Galatians 3:26, 27; II Corinthians 5:17). And so when Jesus orders His followers to take His message of salvation and life to all the world, He also commands, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

The prophets told men about Him for centuries before He appeared. He lived openly among men in fulfillment of everything that had been said about Him. He vindicated and authenticated His claims on us by His death, resurrection, and ascension. With Paul we exclaim: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). These are the reasons I have to ask with all the earnestness of my heart, "Have you considered Jesus Christ?"



John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.