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# The Conversion of a Truth Seeker

John Allen Chalk

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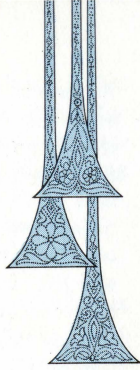
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# THE CONVERSION OF A TRUTH-SEEKER



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# The Conversion of a Truth-Seeker

**A**mong many outstanding features that contribute to the Bible's uniqueness is the way the reader or student is given spiritual principles and then shown practice of these principles in the lives of Biblical characters. Especially is this true in the New Testament Book, the Acts of the Apostles. Herein is presented in full color and action the sweep of Christ's Gospel through the lives of first century citizens. Whereas one turns to the Gospels for testimony about Christ and to the Epistles for instructions to Christians, the Acts presents actual cases of real men and women who responded, in the first century, to Christ. The New Testament leaves no doubt as to what our surrender to Christ involves and how that surrender actually occurs in our lives.

The individual I now ask you to study with me is significant if for no other reason than his attitude toward the Bible. At the point of his spiritual development where we are introduced to him by Luke, the author of Acts, he had only the Old Testament teachings by which

to govern his life. Evidently, as we will soon clearly establish, this high governmental official was unaware that the Old Testament "law was given by Moses; (but) grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Even without this fuller knowledge, the person we consider in this lesson was in an excellent state of mind and life. In the face of what we would call a decided lack of necessary information about Christ, our subject nevertheless was a truth-seeker. Without this attitude the person we study would possibly never have received the message of Christ. Watch closely as we witness the conversion of a truth-seeker.

The Biblical text of this conversion begins at Acts, chapter 8, verse 26. "But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: The same is desert. And he arose and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship; and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah" (Acts 8:26-28).

These three verses reveal an unusual attitude or disposition on the part of the Ethiopian. First, notice his great respect for the importance of worship (Acts 8:27). The trip itself from Ethiopia to Judea was difficult and long. The man making this trip was in a position of no small responsibility, being the Secretary of the Treasury of his native land. Luke specifically states that he "had come to Jerusalem to worship."

The obvious reason for such an arduous trip would be the opportunity to participate in the temple services at Jerusalem, world headquarters for Jewish worship according to the Old Testament order. In Deuteronomy 16 we read of the yearly Jewish festivals which, according to Biblical instruction, required attendance in Jerusalem of all Hebrew males (Deuteronomy 16:5, 6, 16, 17). Likely this Ethiopian was on a pilgrimage to the temple city for one of these "holy" days. Another interesting feature is that as a eunuch he would not be permitted in certain parts of the temple area (Deuteronomy 23:1). As an Ethiopian he may have been a convert to Judaism; what the Old Testament called a "proselyte at the gate." How many strange feelings he must have experienced visiting the holy city; and now, returning home, his mind and heart must have been full of the worship experiences his visit to the temple had provided.



of Christ. Paul called these historically real and spiritually significant events "the gospel" in I Corinthians 15:1-4.

Obviously, as we will see in just a moment, Philip told this truth-seeker about the divinely appointed manner in which men surrendered to Christ for the removal of the guilt of their sins. Jesus' last remarks before returning to heaven included the following charge: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15, 16).

Paul, like Philip must have done for the eunuch, explained to those he taught that baptism was the Christ-taught manner by which penitent believers in Christ unite with Him, with His death, and with His resurrection, to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:1-7).

Our Lord called all who would follow Him in any age to repentance (Luke 13:3). He also requested that those turning to Him and His way of life publicly confess their faith in Him (Matthew 10:32, 33). What would Philip teach the Ethiopian but these instructions and wishes of Christ?

We now see belief realized. Paul explains in Romans, chapter 10, that men cannot believe in someone about whom they have not heard and concludes, "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:14, 17). Philip "preached Jesus" to this truth-seeker because he obviously had no other basis for believing in Christ. But notice the results of Philip's efforts. "And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the Chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:36-39).

The Ethiopian's question, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" indicates the quality of his new faith. No faith is genuine according to Biblical standards until expressed. Paul uses the phrase "obedience of faith" on a number of occasions emphasizing this very element in the faith that saves (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

Later in the Acts we read of the jailor at the city of Philippi who listened to Paul and Silas preach Christ and then completely changed his attitude and life submitting to baptism into Christ. Only after hearing the message of Christ, indicating his penitence for past sins, and accepting Christ in baptism does the Bible call this man a "believer" in Christ (Acts 16:30-34). The "obedience of faith," a phrase employed by the New Testament writers, simply states that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys. We know the Ethiopian is on his way to full faith because of his request for baptism.

The question naturally arises out of the language of the text, "What kind of baptism did the eunuch receive?" First of all, it must have been similar to Jesus' baptism. The words indicating the action of the baptism of Christ and the baptism of the eunuch are almost identical as a study of Matthew 3:16, 17 and Acts 8:38, 39 will reveal. They both "came up out of" the baptismal waters suggesting the obvious import of the word, that of total immersion in water. Further, the Ethiopian's baptism must have been in direct answer to Christ's command, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

The text also makes it very plain that this was water baptism. The question from the person being taught was, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). The element water is mentioned again in verses 38 and 39. There can certainly be no doubt that this was believer's baptism. Philip asked of his new friend, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?" (Acts 8:37). In answer to that question comes the very confession Paul makes mandatory for salvation in Romans 10:9, 10.

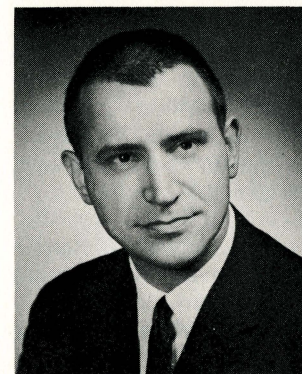
Just as all obedient believers today honor Christ's wishes instead of their own, the eunuch stated, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). And, finally, from the meaning of the original word, from the nature of the action portrayed in the verses just studied, and with an understanding that New Testament baptism is the believer's spiritual union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12), we concluded without reservation that the Ethiopian experienced total immersion in water having become a proper candidate for this great experience by his faith, repentance, and confession.

Now, in verse 39, we see the result or effect of his obedient belief. The Ethiopian official "went on his way rejoicing" or, as the New English Bible renders the

same thought, "went on his way well content" (Acts 8:39). His past sins, regardless of their nature, had been forgiven, or remitted, to use the words of Peter in Acts 2:38. The "gift of the Holy Spirit" was now his possession even as that promise belongs to every obedient person today (Acts 2:38; 5:32). The Ethiopian, in the words of the Apostle Paul, was now a "new creature" because of his spiritual union with Christ (II Corinthians 5:17).

This union with Christ through baptism made Christ real and personal in his life (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21). These are but a few of the New Testament descriptions of the change produced in one's life by this "new birth" (John 3:3-5). This high governmental official from Ethiopia had every reason for complete contentment and every possible spiritual basis for joy. He was now a child of God.

Are you a truth-seeker with respect for worship and the thirst for truth that prepared this man so well for Christ? I hope so. You see, God answers the earnest and sincere request for His truth through the Biblical revelation and through the use of His messengers who must speak nothing more or less than His Word. Determine that your life will be changed by your "obedience of faith" as was the eunuch's. The conversion of a truth-seeker provides a full expression and a clear presentation of the God-given manner in which you can become a Christian.



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.

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hath been death; for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth" (Hebrews 9:15-17).

"Following Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, men continued to meet the Master, Mr. Jones, in the preaching of Him and His message by His inspired followers." The Acts of the Apostles is the Holy Spirit's casebook of men and women who met the Master and had something wonderful happen to them.

The Jews attending the Pentecost Festival at Jerusalem were the first to experience this. They listened to the Apostles preach Christ, in Acts 2, and then responded to the Apostolic direction, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Three thousand persons responded that day and were baptized into Christ.

Later at Samaria as Philip preached Christ, men and women were baptized as they came to believe his messages of Christ (Acts 8:5, 12). Other examples like the Ethiopian nobleman, (Acts 8), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9, 22), and the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16), reveal one startling thing: when men heard the Gospel of Christ and responded in faith, repentance, confession, and baptism a great change overwhelmed them. "Something happened, Mr. Jones, when these people met the Master, and the way they met Him is the way we must meet Him today!"

"Only two things, Mr. Jones, remain necessary for your successful meeting of the Master." First, I must ask, "Do you want to meet Him?" Salvation is only for those who will call on the Lord (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13-15). But to call on the Lord one must believe in the Lord. To believe in Christ requires that we listen, study, and accept the testimony and teachings of Christ (Romans 10:14-17). Out of a full faith and willing surrender will you call on the Lord? Jesus promises to fully answer every question we sincerely ask (Matthew 7:7, 8). No genuine truth-seeker need wait longer for the assurance of Christ's forgiveness and presence. Turn to the New Testament, the covenant of Christ, ask, seek, knock and the answers will flood into your mind and soul.

"Is this question really necessary you ask?" Yes, Mr. Jones, the Roman Governor, Felix, heard Paul "concerning the faith in Christ Jesus." But as the Apostle "reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient

season, I will call thee unto me" (Acts 24:24, 25). Later, King Agrippa stated to the same preacher, "With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Neither of these men, like so many, really wanted to meet the Master!

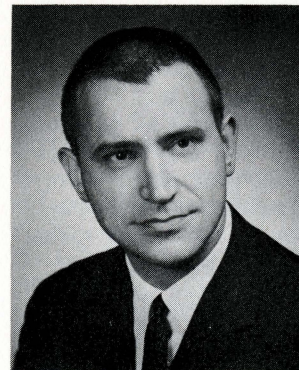
Second, I must ask, "Do you know how to meet the Master?" A few moments ago we pointed to Christ's preparation for the era following His earthly ministry. In the Great Commission and other teachings the Master made clear the way we surrender to Him or meet Him.

Meet the Master today in obedient trust. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys (John 3:16; 3:36). The Philippian Jailor who met the Master, as do we, was told to believe. Following the proclamation of the Gospel to him and his family, and after his repentance is suggested and his baptism occurs, the Bible then, and only then, states that he is a believer in God (Acts 16:30-34).

Meet the Master in genuine repentance. Jesus taught, "Except you repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" (Luke 13:3). Peter, under the commission of Christ and the direction of the Holy Spirit, commanded, "Repent ye" (Acts 2:38). Repentance is that decision of the will and redirection of the body that represents a complete change in attitude toward sin and toward God.

Meet the Master in total commitment. Jesus warned, "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." John the Apostle was moved to write, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). There is no more serious decision than the one to meet Jesus. To know the Master is to live for Him completely and unreservedly.

"Meeting the Master, Mr. Jones, is not a difficult introduction. In fact it can be the easiest of your life." Jesus already extends His hand, His sacrificed life, His saving blood, His Father's friendship, His plan for the remainder of your life. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," Jesus says (Revelation 3:20). Any man who will hear His knock or recognize His offer of friendship and respond obediently to His will in obedient trust, genuine repentance, and total commitment will know the life-changing, destiny-determining experience that occurs when "Mr. Jones Meets the Master."



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