

May, 2007

Pause Ponder Profit

Give Us A Sign

by James A. Brown

So-called modern day miracle workers cannot perform miracles. Yes, you heard me right. So-called modern day miracle workers cannot perform miracles. They have deceived and victimized thousands upon thousands of people. They know within their hearts that they cannot work miracles, but, like Simon the sorcerer, they go about defrauding gullible people with their magic and trickery (Acts 8:9-24). They will not defend their miracle working and tongue speaking in public debate, for they lack physical proof. Neither do they have book, chapter, and verse for their teaching and practice. If it was against the law to perform miracles not one of these modern day miracle workers would ever be convicted. For in order to convict someone of a crime, you need evidence. Even if they confess to the crime of performing a miracle, they, themselves cannot produce sufficient evidence to get themselves convicted. And when you ask for a sign, proof or evidence that they can perform a miracle, they then falsely charge you with a crime against God.

Many people have been duped into

thinking that it is wrong to ask for this evidence. We need to remember that these swindlers are smart. If they can make you believe it is wrong to ask for a sign, then they will never be convicted of being a fraud. Many times they misuse Matthew 12:38-40 to say that one cannot ask for a sign. But notice what the text really says: *"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'"* (Matt. 12:38-40). Did Jesus say He would not give a sign? To the contrary, He would give a sign. The sign of His own resurrection from the dead.

Jesus had performed many miracles as evidence of His deity, but the Pharisees accused Him of doing it by the power of Satan (Matt. 12:24). He also continued to perform signs, wonders, and miracles after this request for a sign (Matt. 14:19-21, 25, 34-36; 15:29-31). Jesus called the people of His day an "adulterous generation" because they had rejected Him, even after He had given them sufficient evidence to believe. He did not hide behind the walls of some meeting place with His little band of believers. Instead, He, and those who had the power to work miracles, brought them to the masses of unbelievers. Jesus brought His miracles to the streets of the cities in which He preached. Miracles were done in public view and were of such a nature that no one could deny them (Acts 4:16). Jesus performed many miracles to cause people to believe (Jn. 20:30-31). If the modern day miracle workers want us to believe, let them, "give us a sign."



Is Baptism Sprinkling Or Pouring?

by James A. Brown

This is a simple question. But it is a question that not everyone answers truthfully. Some denominations teach that baptism is a sprinkling or pouring of water upon the one who is submitting. But the Bible teaches that baptism is neither sprinkling nor pouring.

Those who believe that baptism is sprinkling or pouring, run as fast as they can to Webster's dictionary for a defense of their belief. But how Webster defines the word baptism is no defense at all. We must remember that Webster defines English words as they are used today. The meanings of these words are ever changing. For example, consider how the word "gay" has changed in meaning through the years. In order to properly define the word "baptism" consider two other references: (1) The Bible, i. e., how the word is used in the New Testament, (2) The Greek dictionaries, i. e., how the Greek scholars have defined the word.

The New Testament was originally written in Koine Greek—the common Greek language of that time period. The words baptist, baptism, baptize, baptized, and baptizing are all Greek words that have been transliterated into our English language. All of these words are derived from the Greek word "bapto" and share its meaning. James Strong in his Greek concordance defines this word as "to overwhelm, i. e., cover wholly with a fluid;..." The word baptism then consist "of the processes of immersion, submersion, and emergence," so says Vine in his Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words. J. H. Thayer in his Greek-English Lexicon defines the word as "immersion, submersion." Hundreds of other Greek scholars define the word in exactly the same way. So, what are we to conclude? Simply,

that the word baptism in the Koine Greek did not mean to sprinkle or pour water on someone.

Even if we did not have the Greek scholars to define the word for us, we could still properly define it by how it is used in the New Testament. Paul in Romans 6:4 said, "therefore we were buried with Him through baptism." Please, take note of the phrase "buried with Him." Paul likens baptism in this verse to a burial. When we bury someone, we do not sprinkle him with dirt. When one is buried, he is immersed or submerged in the earth. Also consider John 3:5-7 where Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he can not enter the kingdom of God. ... You must be born again." Jesus uses the word "born" figuratively but it is based upon a real or natural birth. When a baby is born, it comes forth or emerges from its mothers womb. In like manner when a man is born of water (water of baptism) he comes forth from it, which implies that he first had to be immersed in it. Consider another example in Acts 8:26-29, where Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. We are told in verse 38 that they both "went down into the water." Why did they go "down into the water"? If baptism was sprinkling or pouring, surely Philip could have used water from his water jug (supposing he carried water on his journey). If the water jug was empty, he could have refilled it from the source of water (verse 36). If baptism was sprinkling, Philip could have reached his hand into the water source and then sprinkled the eunuch. Why did they go "down into the water"? The answer is obvious, they went into the water so Philip could baptize—immerse the eunuch. Then "they came up out of the water" (verse 39).

Other New Testament examples can be given. However, I believe you can see that baptism is not the sprinkling or pouring of water on someone but the immersion of someone in water for the remission of sin.

Immodest Apparel

by L. A. Stauffer

When I began preaching in the late 50's, what we commonly call "immodest apparel" was worn by only weak and indifferent members of the church. Women who seldom attended Bible classes and only assembled once or twice a month had few scruples against wearing shorts, halters, one-piece swimsuits, low-cut dresses, skin-tight pants or jeans, etc. These same ones donned the mini-skirts, two-piece swimsuits and bikinis when they became popular a few years later. Men, except for wearing swimsuits at public pools or beaches, weren't involved as extensively in immodesty.

But now that has all changed. I, for one, am convinced that we have all but lost the battle against lascivious apparel. When the middle-aged generation of today is gone and our new generation of youth become the core and backbone of the church, I shudder to think of the meager clothing that will be accepted. Preachers, elders, deacons, bible-class teachers, and other stable members in many sound churches are caving in to the demands of young people and the numbing influence of an ungodly world. What is mind-boggling and disturbing is that this includes the wearing of immodest apparel by the children of some of the most dedicated members of the church—brothers and sisters who themselves would not think of dressing as their kids do.

These very parents will let their kids spend a day of vacation on the beach; permit them to wear swimsuits and shorts in the yard or wash the car; encourage them to wear low-cut, backless dresses to formal parties or join the pom poms; ignore the tight-fitting pants or tops that vividly outline appealing parts of their anatomy, etc. And what's really sad is that many of these kids have high moral standards otherwise. Why, then, has this become so prevalent?

Many answers, no doubt, could be given. But the simple fact is that kids do it because they want to, like to, and think nothing of it. A humanistic philosophy dominates today's society—the schools, print media, movie and TV productions, advertisements, commercials, etc. And that philosophy has bombarded us with "do your own thing," "you only go around once in life-get all the gusto you can," "take care of number one," etc. They have also sold everything from toothpaste to big "K" cereal, to health-spa memberships with lewd, sexually enticing commercials. Displays of near nudity have become so commonplace in our homes that kids view it as a normal part of life.

What all this hype brings to mind is an important fact of life. We are reminded daily that God made the bodies of man and woman attractive to one another. He made them pleasant to look upon and created in each a desire for the other sexually. It must be, next to eating, the strongest urge of the flesh. And when He finished this creation He saw that it, along with all things, was "very good" (see Gen. 1:27-31). But from the beginning, God placed boundaries on man and woman, limiting their desires for one another and the fulfillment of those urges to marriage. Only there can they become "one flesh;" only there the bed is "undefiled;" only there "thy desire shall be" to a man; only there shall a man "looketh upon a woman to lust after her" (see Gen. 2:18-25; Heb. 13:4; Gen. 3:16; Matt. 5:27, 28).

When men and women dress in a way to create this "lust" and "desire" in someone other than their wife or husband, they promote lasciviousness, and inordinate or lewd urges. This includes women who wear tight pants and attractively display an area of the body that entices men; who adorn themselves in clothing that in a sensuous way either accentuates or openly shows the bosom; and who dress in apparel that reveals the most alluring parts of the

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body, including the legs, and stirs the imagination of the average man. Sadly enough, men now dress in the same manner and women shamelessly and glowingly speak of the impure thoughts this provokes. Paul surely condemns this kind of immodesty when he says: "I want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety... appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (1 Tim. 2:9, 10 - NIV).

A Brittle Thing

*A very brittle thing is speech
Take care just how you bend it.
For anyone can make a break
But very few can mend it.*
— Author Unknown

It Matters Not

*It matters not what others say
In ridicule or fun.
I want to live that I may hear
Him say to me, "Well done."*
— Author Unknown

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