

## “Will You Baptize Me?”

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by Bill Crews

It happened about forty years ago. One morning the phone rang in our first home in Baton Rouge, La. When I answered, a man asked if I was the preacher for the Park Forest church of Christ. After I answered in the affirmative, he then asked if I would baptize him!

There I was living in Baton Rouge, preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ at whatever opportunity I had, hoping to persuade as many as I could to be baptized, and a total stranger, who had never heard me teach anything, calls me “out of the blue” and wants to know if I would consent to baptize him!

Well, what did I say and do? To our religious neighbors who know what importance we attach to baptism, and how much we want people to be baptized, and how soon we baptize those who want to be baptized, it would surely seem that any “church of Christ preacher” would “jump” at such a chance by answering with an unqualified “yes” and arranging for a baptism as quickly as possible. But I didn’t answer with an unqualified “yes.” I told the man that I would be glad to baptize him if he knew and understood what he was doing, if he was obeying the Lord, if he was a penitent believer willing to confess his faith in Christ.

But who was this man, and why did he want to be baptized? As it turned out, he was a middle-aged man and a victim of what proved later to be terminal cancer. In prior years he had gone into the Methodist Church. He had been “baptized” by having a little water sprinkled upon his head. His illness and surgery had put him out of work and given him much time to think. His thinking had been about his soul, and God, and the judgment. Not only had he started reading the Bible; he had read through the New Testament a few times. That reading had convinced him that baptism was immersion in water. He knew, then, both that he had never been baptized and that he had not been ready to be baptized. Our building was only a few blocks from the home of the relatives with whom he was staying, and my name was on our sign out front. He had then found my name in the phone book and called my home. I met the man, talked to him, and baptized him.

This simple case impressed upon my mind, once again, the power and simplicity of the gospel – in particular that part of God’s word that the individual needs to know and understand to his own salvation.

This man had stated, “The Bible makes it so clear that any man can understand it. Baptism cannot be anything except immersion in water. I knew then that sprinkling was not baptism.” Perhaps among our readers are those who belong to religious bodies that practice sprinkling or pouring for baptism. Are you willing to search and see? Did you know that every Greek lexicon on Koine Greek (the language in which the New Testament was originally written) defines the word for baptize to mean to wash, dip, immerse, plunge, overwhelm, submerge, etc.? None defines it to mean to sprinkle or pour (there were other Koine Greek words that have those meanings). Will you read the descriptions of the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:13-17? and the baptism of the Ethiopian in Acts 8:35-39? Will you read Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:3-4 where baptism is described as a burial and a resurrection? Will you, in fact, begin now to read your Bible and to search as did this man? For you, too, are rapidly moving toward the judgment and surely you want to be ready.

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