

# SERMON II

## SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE THAT DANIEL MERRILL'S DEFINITION OF BAPTISM IS BIBICALLY CORRECT

Matthew 28:19-20

*"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*

### THE TRUTH CAN BE KNOWN AS WE SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

The business which we are now upon depends very much upon the definitions of certain words, and principally upon the definition of the word *baptize*, and upon the certain evidence of such definition or definitions being accurate and just. For we can no otherwise understand what God the Lord saith unto us, than by knowing the import of the words by which he is pleased to communicate his will.

The great Teacher who came from God, hath doubtless communicated his mind so explicitly that the humble in heart may know the common matters which relate to faith and practice. If we devoutly search the scriptures, and seek wisdom as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, God will make us to understand knowledge, and to serve him with acceptable practice.

The Spirit of the Lord hath most certainly chosen acceptable words, words of definite meaning. We are to search out their signification, and to be obedient. I cannot judge of their signification for you, nor can I answer for the judgment which you shall make up, nor can you for me.

I am by my office obliged to exhibit, so far as I can, all those divine truths which relate to faith and practice. I am obliged to believe and practice according to the best light which I can gather, or have in any way afforded me. You are under similar obligations.

### THE GOAL

#### THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THE TRUTH

While we proceed, I wish you to believe fully two things; one is, that truth, if believed and practiced, will not, on the whole, harm you. The other is, that the most sure way to acquire truth is, to be of a humble and obedient mind, ready to receive the truth. For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.

In the preceding discourse, we attended to the definition of certain words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism; and then collected the scripture account of baptism, together with some other texts which are supposed to throw light upon the subject under consideration.

In this discourse, we are—to produce the most direct evidence that my definitions of baptism and to baptize are accurate and just. The definition which I gave of baptism was, a *washing, a sacred, a ceremonial* washing. I will now add to this definition that it is immersion, or dipping one all over in water.

The definition which I gave of the word *baptize* is, to dip all over, to wash. I will also add, that the word signifies, to wash the body, or any thing, all over. What I mean is, that these are the significations of the words *baptisma* and *baptize*, which are rendered baptism, and, to baptize.

## EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS DANIEL MERRILL'S DEFINITION

I am now to produce evidence that this is a just and accurate definition of the words. You will observe, that this is quite different from the *subjects* of baptism; that is another subject which must be attended to in its place.

The evidence which I have to offer, in order to fix precisely the just sense and meaning of the words *baptism* and to *baptize*, is contained in the following facts.

### A.

#### GREEK LEXICON, CONCORDANCE AND ENGLISH DICTIONARIES

The first comprises what the Greek Lexicon, Concordance, and two English dictionaries testify of the words.

1. **Schrevelius's Lexicon** testifies, the import of *baptism* is *lotio*, washing. Also that *baptize* signifies to *wash*, to put under water, or under any other liquid thing; to sink, dip in, duck or plunge over head, to immerse.

2. **Butterworth's Concordance** says, Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by Jesus Christ, whereby a professed believer in Christ is, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, immersed in and covered with water, and then raised up out of it as a sign of his fellowship with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, and a sign of his own death to sin, and resurrection to newness of life here, and to life eternal hereafter. The same Concordance defines the word to baptize thus—to dip, immerse, or plunge.

3. **Entick's Dictionary** says, that—*Baptism* is a sacrament that admits into the church. — *Baptizer*, one who christens, or dips.—*Baptistry*, the place of baptizing at, a font.----*Baptize*, to christen, plunge, overwhelm.—*Baptized*, admitted to baptism, dipt, &c.

4. **Bailey's Dictionary**, speaking of baptism, or rather the place in which persons were baptized, says, *Baptistry* is either the place or vessel in which persons are baptized. In ancient times, this being performed by immersion, the persons so initiated went into a river and were plunged.

But in the time of Constantine the Great, chapels or places on purpose to baptize in, were built in great cities, which was performed in the eastern and warmer countries by dipping the persons; but in process of time, in the western and colder countries, sprinkling was substituted in place of dipping; which was the origin of our fonts in churches.

### B.

#### CIRCUMSTANTIAL FACTS RELATING TO BAPTISM

I will repeat some of the attendant or circumstantial facts, which have relation to the ordinance of baptism, that you may look at them and judge for yourselves, whether the preceding definitions appear just.

1. **WHERE JOHN BAPTIZED:** John baptized IN the river Jordan. He was baptizing in Enon, because there was much water there.

2. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD THAT DESCRIBES THE BAPTISMAL LOCATION**

The name of the place, baptism was administered, is *baptisterion*, or *baptistry*, which signifies a place in which to wash the body all over.

3. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORDS DESCRIBING BAPTISM**

*Baptism* signifies to dip, plunge, immerse, or wash the body all over in water. *Baptizer* signifies one who dips, plunges, or washes the body all over in water. *To baptize* signifies to

plunge under water, to dip, or to wash to body all over. *To be baptized* is to be plunged, immersed, or washed all over in water.

Does this whole matter, taking so many of the words, and some circumstances, and finding them all so well agreeing together, help you, in any degree, to the definition of the word *baptize*? Supposing these things be facts, and you had never had any prejudice for or against the word *baptize*, would you be able to gather the meaning of it from what hath been said?

### OBJECTION BY PEDO-BAPTIZERS

There is an objection starting in the minds of some of you, which should be now obviated, lest in prejudice your minds from the truth. The objection is, do not the words signify some other things, as well as those which have been mentioned?

### ANSWER TO OBJECTION

I have thought they did: but I have searched in several dictionaries, and read many authors upon the words, yet have not found one dictionary which has given a definition of the words different from what I have given; nor one author who has been able to show, that the true meaning of the words is any otherwise than what I have mentioned.

Besides, the very course of argumentation which Dr. Lathrop, Mr. Cleaveland and others have taken, by which to prove that *baptize* hath some other signification than to dip, immerse, to bury or overwhelm, is an implicit confession that they were not able to prove any such thing. It is also a strong presumptive argument, that no different signification can be found.

Their argument is this: *Bapto* signifies, in one instance, in the Old Testament, to wet with the dew of heaven. *Baptizo* is the offspring of *bapto*, and consequently may be taken in the same sense.

This argument is of the same weight with the following: My father believes in sprinkling, as being baptism: I am his offspring, and consequently I believe the same; when the fact is, I am largely convinced that it is no such thing. Would gentleman employ such an argument, did not their cause labor? Such an argument, when it stands, as it does, at the front of all their supported evidence, is an implicit confession, that they cannot prove what they wish to.\*

\*Since writing the above, I have met with *Cole's Latin Dictionary*, which gives one English of *baptize*, to *sprinkle*. It hath, indeed, been matter of not little surprise, that all modern dictionary compilers have not given one definition of the word *baptize*, to *sprinkle*; for it, indeed, is one signification, which the practice of many Christians, for two or three hundred years past, has given to the word.

Had all lexicons, and all dictionaries, for the two last centuries, borne united testimony, that one sense of the word *baptize* was to *sprinkle*, it would not have been half so unaccountable as it now is that they have so generally retained the ancient and primitive significations, and refused to adopt the modern one, which prejudice, convenience and modern practice have given to it. Indeed, could a thousand modern lexicons and dictionaries be found, which should say, to *sprinkle* is one sense in which *baptize* is used, it would all come to nothing, unless they should testify that this is one of the ancient and primitive significations and even then, it would come to no more than this, that the word is less determinate, than it is now supposed to be. Could they do this, it would be still nothing, unless they prove the scriptures use it in this sense, which they cannot do. But if they could, it would not be fully to their point, unless they can show that it is thus used in application to the ordinance. [end of footnote]

This matter will have farther attention in another place.

C.  
*BAPTISMOS AND BAPTIZO*  
THE TWO TRANSLATIONS

The words *baptismos* and *baptizo* have two, and only two, translations in the New Testament: These two are, *baptism* and *washing*. They are very generally rendered, *baptism*, or to *baptize*. This is their usual translation. But several times in *Mark*, *Luke*, and the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, they are rendered washing.

As the washing of pots, and cups, and brazen vessels and tables, and seats on which they reclined, when they are meat; and *diaphorois baptismois* in Hebrew is rendered *divers washings*.

In the law given by Moses, the people were, on many occasions, to bathe their bodies, and wash their clothes in water; and also to put their pots and cups and brazen vessels into water, that they might be cleansed from ceremonial uncleanness.

To these legal ceremonies the Pharisees had added traditional ones, which were, no doubt, observed in the same manner as those appointed by the Lord. If so, then the washing of pots, &c. in *Mark*, was putting them into water, as the command was to do, Lev. 11:32 32.

The divers washings in *Heb.* ix. 10. were ceremonial washings, or bathings, in which the body was washed, or dipped. *Numbers.* 19:19. This being the case, does not this matter go to confirm, or determine, what is the definition of baptism?

D.  
TESTIMONIALS CONCERNING THE MEANING OF THE  
WORD *BAPTIZO*

We will now mention a few noted witnesses, who have given their testimony as to the meaning of the word *baptizo*.

1. CALVIN: Calvin, a very warm opposer of the Baptists, shall, as a witness in this cause, speak first. His testimony is, "Howbeit, the very word of baptizing signifieth to dip."

2. ZANCHIUS: Zanchius, as brought forward by the Rev. Mr. Butterworth, shall be my next witness. He says, *baptizo* is to immerse, plunge under, to overwhelm with water.

3. DR. OWEN: I could quote, or bring forward, a multitude of witnesses, and all from our own order, the Pedobaptists, to prove the same point. But in the mouth of two or three witnesses, if they be good ones, every word shall be established. We will therefore produce but one more; that shall be good Dr. Owen. "For original and nature signification of it (*baptizo*) signifies to dip, to plunge."

E.  
THE USE OF THE GREEK WORD *LOUO* HAS THE SAME  
MEANING AS THE WORD *BAPTIZO*

I will mention to you a Greek word, which Paul repeatedly uses, as signifying the same thing as *baptizo*, and where he means the same thing, namely, baptism.

In *I Cor.* 6:11. Paul speaking to the Corinthians of divers kinds of vile sinners, says "And such were some of you; but ye are washed," &c.

*Eph.* 5:26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it (the church) with the *washing* of water, by the word.

*Heb.* 10:22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our *bodies washed* with pure water.

The Pedobaptists acknowledge that *washing*, in these texts, means *baptism*, and I know not that any of them deny it. Baptism and washing appear to be used as synonymous words, or as words signifying the same thing. If this be the case, then the two words, *baptizo* and *louo*, which are translated, one to baptize, and the other to wash, mean the same thing, and are thus intended by the Apostle.

Then, provided we can determine what *louo* means, we can also determine what is the signification of *baptizo*. This word, *louo*, signifies to wash, and to bathe the body in water; for thus it is generally if not universally used, and from it is *loutron*, a bath, or place to wash the body in.

Besides, the word *louo*, is never used in the New Testament, nor any where else, to my knowledge, to signify either sprinkling or common washing. Its appropriate sense appears to be, bathing, or washing any thing all over; as you may see, *Acts* 9:37. and 16:33; *II Peter* 2:22; which are the only places where I recollect the word *louo* is used, save where the ordinance of baptism appears to be referred to.

This being the case, the matter appears just as it would, provided the ordinance included the bathing of the body in water. This is letting scripture interpret itself; and the interpretation which it gives is, baptism is bathing, or washing the body in water. This, therefore, may help you a little towards determining in your minds what is the signification of *baptizo*. For *louo* is repeatedly used in scripture, as importing the same mode of washing which is commanded in the ordinance of baptism.

## F.

### PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE MODE OF BAPTIZING SUPPORTS IMMERSION

Paul's description of the mode of baptizing, or of what is done to those who are baptized, may afford you farther light upon the subject.

Paul brings this matter up to the Roman and Colossian Christians, as a matter well known to them. To the former he says, *Rom.* 6:4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. To the other he says, *Col.* 2:12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Upon these texts, Dr. Doddridge has the following note, "It seems the part of candor to confess, that here is an allusion to baptism by immersion, as was most usual in these early times." Here the good doctor says "as was *most usual*:" this I shall, by and by, explain to you."

In the mean time, you will please to pay due attention to what was done to those who were baptized, and which appears to be familiar to the Roman and Colossian Christians. The Apostle makes no remarks, and explains nothing to them, but speaks to them as though they would and did well understand what he meant, when he said, "We are buried with him by baptism unto death;" and, "Buried with him in baptism." It is plain fact, that Paul thus speaks, and it also appears, very plainly, that he had no apprehension but that he should be understood.

Bishop Hoadly's declaration appears to be much in point: 'If baptism,' says he, 'had been THEN,' *i.e.* in the apostles' days, 'performed as it is NOW among us, we should never have so much as heard of this form of expression, of dying, and rising again in this rite.'\*(*Ten Letters*)

These things I have thought it my duty to lay before you, that I might assist you, by a number of plain facts, to form a judgment, each one for himself, what the meaning of baptism is, and what the word to *baptize* signifies.

## THE EVIDENCE ALL FAVORS IMMERSION

I have still more light upon this subject, and shall, in the next discourse, lay it within your view. It will perhaps be, to some of you, more convincing than any thing which I have as yet exhibited. But previously I will make one observation, and it is this: all the evidence we have been exhibiting, we have on one side of the question; and, if I mistake not, none on the other to counteract it:

For if my memory and judgment be correct, the wisest and best of men, of our own denomination, have asserted, that these things are so. I do not say that all good men have; but the most learned have, and some who have appeared very pious.

But you will say, why have they not practiced differently, if they have thus believed? I am not answerable for their practice; but, of the Lord will, I shall, ere long, give you the reasons which they assign.

### SOME CLEAR CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVIDENCE THUS FAR PRESENTED

I shall only add, for the present, two or three consequences, and then leave the subject for your consideration.

#### 1. THE HONEST TESTIMONY OF NOTED PEDO-BAPTISTS SUPPORTS THE BAPTIST POSITION

The Baptists have, against our practice, and for theirs, that kind of evidence which is, perhaps, in all cases but the present, considered the most unequivocal and certain. This evidence is given in by a cloud of witnesses, who, whilst they are bearing their testimony, condemn themselves every sentence they utter.

If these men, who are confessed by both sides to be both pious and learned, may be believed, the cause will most certainly be determined against us; for there was never a clearer case. They unitedly testify that the scripture mode of baptism is immersion, but omit the practice. In this they condemn themselves.

#### 2. THE SCRIPTURE SENSE OF THE WORDS DESCRIBING BAPTISM SUSTAINS ONLY IMMERSION AS THE BIBLICAL PRACTICE

The scripture sense, and, for aught appears, the only sense, of baptism, is, dipping, immersion, burying in water, being overwhelmed, and the like.

#### THE DILEMMA PEDO-BAPTISTS FACE

We are brought to this dilemma, either to commence Baptists, as to the mode, or do as our fathers have done, confess the truth in theory, and neglect it in practice.