

THE MODE AND SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM

SERMON I

A COMPILATION OF ALL THE WORDS, PASSAGES AND VERSES DEALING WITH BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, ALONG WITH BRIEF DEFINITIONS AND SOME INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

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."

[Ed: Merrill begins his seven sermons with part II of the Great Commission, the part dealing with baptism; part II-baptism-constitutes the theme and content of his seven sermons]

It hath pleased the Father of Mercies to bestow on fallen man a revelation from heaven. In it is contained the scheme of grace, which brings life and immortality to light. It shows the way by which to escape the wrath to come, and to find the favor of God. All scripture is given by his inspiration and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Till the human heart be humbled, in measure, man feels not his need of divine teaching; nor will he make the scriptures the man of his counsel. But, my brethren, and people, it is doubtless the case that many of you possess a willingness to have your principles and practice squared by the word and testimony of Jesus Christ. My text contains some of the last words of our great High-Priest.

It is the general orders which he gave his first apostles and left for the instruction, practice and comfort of all their successors, to the end of the world. In the verse which precedes my text, Christ informs us that all power in heaven and in earth is given unto him.

His words, therefore, are clothed with authority. May we hear, and fear, and be obedient. Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto the King of Zion, What dost thou?

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BELIEVERS

So far as we be Christians, all that is necessary to enforce obedience is, to know what Christ would have us to do. Perhaps not a passage of all the oracles of truth contains more extensive instruction than do the words of my text. The commands are exceedingly broad; the Baptismal Institution comprehends all obedient disciples; and the comforting promise is durable as the world.

THE THREE PARTS TO THE GREAT COMMISSION

In my text, Christ Jesus, the Head of the church and Lord of all, constituted his present and succeeding disciples to be apostles unto all nations. It contains their commission and general and particular orders. In it they are directed—

I. To go and disciple all nations.

II. To baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

III. He directs these newly constituted apostles, and all their successors, to teach their baptized disciples to observe all things whatsoever he had given in commandment.

Lastly. For their encouragement and comfort, he adds, And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

I suppose it will be expedient, and with me it is an indispensable duty, that I lay each of these propositions as fairly and as fully before you as I can. But I shall not observe the order in which they lie in my text, which is as I have just stated them. For I have many things to say unto you, in agreement with my text, but fear that you are not, all of you, able to bear them now.

We shall therefore begin with the **II** [2nd Part of the Great Commission] which contains Christ's command to baptize, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, those who shall be disciplined of all nations.

MERRILL'S GOAL IN THE FIRST SERMON

TO GIVE THE DEFINITION AND DESIGN OF BAPTISM FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

Nor do I purpose to call your attention, at this time, to the whole which is implied in this proposition. But what I purpose is, to **define** a few words which appertain to the ordinance, and then collect the scripture account of baptism, with some other texts, which may throw light upon the subject.

Afterwards, in discourses which may follow, I may **produce evidence that my definition of baptism is accurate and just**; and show **how the apostles and primitive Christians understood this matter, and how they practiced**. When this is done, it will be easily seen, what is the outward and visible part of baptism; and then the **purport** [meaning-intention], **end** and **design** of the institution may call for some attention.

Before I proceed to open, illustrate and confirm these particulars, I have several things to say unto you. For I wish you to attend to the subject without partiality and without hypocrisy. I pray God to remove darkness and all prejudice from your minds, that you may, indeed, come to the law and to the testimony of Jesus Christ in this matter.

THE ANTICIPATED DISPLEASURE AND SHOCK OF RELATIVES AND FRIENDS UPON THE PREACHING AND PRINTING OF THESE SERMONS

You will consider me as under the strongest worldly inducements to continue to believe and practice as I have heretofore done; for should I, after mature consideration, be constrained to believe and practice differently, you will be released from all legal obligations to afford me any farther support;

My relations will, the most of them, probably be greatly shocked and displeased at the report; many, whom I highly value as Christians, and numbers of them zealous preachers of the gospel, will, it may be, consider me as lost, and worse than lost, to the church, and world:

And, besides this, multitudes will, no doubt, say all manner of evil against me. All this being true, with a thousand other connected smaller evils, and nothing of a worldly nature in prospect, save what is contained in the promise of Jesus Christ, you cannot but conclude that I shall proceed no farther in this matter than I am obliged to, in following the Lamb of God whithersoever he goeth.

Having said thus much with respect to myself, I will still add, that, should a change in my belief and practice, respecting the subject on hand, bring me to a more full belief and practice of the truth, I shall, on the whole, be a gainer.

But, should a change take place, and I be called to sustain all the evils which I may calculate upon, and after all be plunged myself into a hurtful and bewildering error, surely all the meek and lowly in heart would rather commiserate than revile me.

THE INFALLIBLE TEST

ALL ARGUMENTS MUST CONFORM TO SCRIPTURE

Another thing I would mention to you, so that the subject may, if it possibly can, meet your minds without prejudice. You ought not to fix your judgments, nor found your belief, upon the arguments or confessions of great and good men, any farther than such arguments and confessions are conformed with the scriptures of the truth.

Should we hearken to what the greatest and best of men have confessed and affirmed of the subject which we are about to consider, and have our belief and practice corresponding with what they have written, the matter would, most evidently, go against what we have, in time past, both believed and practiced.

For they have very generally, or very many of them, if not all of them, confessed, or affirmed, however their practice may have been, that immersion was the mode practiced by the apostles and primitive church. This I purpose to prove to you in its proper place.

What I have more to add, before I proceed to the main business, is, to state a few plain truths.

SIX BASIC TRUTHS CONCERNING BAPTISM

1. Baptism is a positive institution, about which we can know nothing, as to its being a Christian ordinance, but from what Christ, and those inspired by his Spirit, have taught us.
2. All which we are required to believe and practice, with respect to the Christian ordinance of baptism, is declared to us by Jesus Christ and his forerunner and apostles.
3. When Jesus Christ first instituted the ordinance of baptism, he, no doubt, delivered his mind so clearly and fully upon the subject, that his immediate disciples and apostles understood and practiced as he would have them.
4. Every thing which hath, by the precepts and commandments of men, been added since, is distinct from the ordinance, and makes no part of it.
5. No man, or body of men, have any more authority to add to this ordinance, or to diminish from it, than they have to institute a new one and call it Christ's.
6. Whenever, and wherever, this ordinance is so changed, as to lose the intent of the Institutor, then and there the ordinance is lost, and becomes no Christian ordinance at all.

MERRILL'S PROCEDURAL PLAN FOR THE FIRST SERMON

Having laid these preparatory observations, remarks and plain truths before you, we proceed to consider the subject now on hand, which is—Christ's command to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, those who shall be disciples of all nations.

What is proposed for the present discourse is—

1. To define a few words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism. Then—
2. To collect the scripture account of baptism, together with some other texts, which may throw light upon the subject. Afterwards, in some following discourses, we may—
3. Produce evidence that my definition of baptism is accurate and just. Then show—
4. How the apostles and primitive church understood this matter and how they practiced. When this is done, it will be easily seen—
5. What is the outward and visible part of Christian baptism. Then—*Lastly*. The purport, and design of the baptismal institution may call for our attention. Agreeably to what is proposed, we are—

DEFINITIONS OF WORDS

A. To define a few words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism. These are

1. *Baptisterion*, Greek; *baptisterium*, and *lavacrum*, Latin; a font, a bath, a washing place, a vessel to wash the body in; English.
2. *Baptisma* and *baptismos*, Greek; *Baptisma* and *lotio*, also *ablutia saura*, Latin; baptism, washing, sacred, ceremonial washing; English.
3. *Baptisles*, Greek; *baptista*, Latin; one who dips, a Baptizer; English.
4. *Baptizo*, Greek; *Baptize*, *mergo*, *lavo*, Latin; to Baptize, to dip all over, to wash; English.
5. *Louo*, Greek; *lavo*, Latin; to wash, to rinse, to bathe; English.

COLLECTION OF ALL NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES ON BAPTISM AND RELATED TEXTS

B. We are to collect the scripture account of baptism, together with some other texts which may throw light upon the subject.

VERSES RELATING TO JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BAPTISM [28 Scriptural References]

We will begin with those passages which speak of the baptism of John.

1. *Matt. 3:5,6,7*. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers" & c.
2. Verse 11. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance," & c.
3. Verses 13,14,15,16. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him: but John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and, comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness: then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water."
4. *Matt. 21: 25,26,27*. "The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we should say, From heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not believe him? But, if we shall say, Of men we fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell," & c.

5. *Mark* 1:4,5. "John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him IN the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

6. Verses 8,9,10. "I indeed have baptized you with water—And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John IN Jordan; and straightway coming up out of the water," & c.

7. *Mark* 11:30. "The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?"

8. *Luke* 3:3. "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

9. Verses 7,8. "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers----- bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

10. Verse 12. "Then came also publicans to be baptized."

11. Verse 16. "I indeed baptize you with water."

12. Verse 21. "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also, being baptized," & c.

13. *Luke* 7:29,30. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."

14. *Luke* 20:4. "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?"

15. *John* 1:25,26. "Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water."

16. Verse 28. "Beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."

17. Verse 31. "That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water."

18. Verse 33. "He that sent me to baptize with water."

19. *John* 3:23. "And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized."

20. *John* 4:1. "The Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John."

21. *John* 10: 40. "Beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized."

22. *Acts* 1:5. "John truly baptized with water."

23. Verse 22. "Beginning from the baptism of John."

24. *Acts* 10:37. "After the baptism which John preached."

25. *Acts* 11:16. "John indeed baptized with water."

26. *Acts* 12:24. "When John had first preached, before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people."

27. *Acts* 17:25. "He [Apollos] spake and taught diligently, the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John."

28. *Acts* 19:3,4. "Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him, which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

REFERENCES TO BAPTISM AS TAUGHT BY CHRIST AND/OR THE APOSTLES REFERRING TO CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT BAPTISM

[31 Scriptural References-Several passages use the word "baptism" numerous times]

We will next turn our attention to those texts which mention Christ's baptism.

1. *Matt.* 28:19. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
2. *Mark* 16:15,16. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved."
3. *John* 3:5. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit," &c.
4. Verse 22. "After these things, came Jesus and his disciples in the land of Judea, and there tarried with them and baptized."
5. Verse 26. "Behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."
6. *John* 4:1,2. "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples."
7. *Acts* 3:38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
8. *Acts* 2:41. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."
9. *Acts* 8:12,13. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also, and when he was baptized," &c.
10. *Acts* 8:16. "Only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."
11. Verses 36,37,38,39. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water," &c.
12. *Acts* 9:18. "And he [Saul] arose, and was baptized."
13. *Acts* 10:47,48. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."
14. *Acts* 16:15. "And when she [Lydia] was baptized, and her household."
15. Verse 33. "And was baptized, he [the jailer] and all his, straightway."
16. *Acts* 18:8. "And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized."
17. *Acts* 19:5. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."
18. *Acts* 22:19. "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
19. *Rom.* 6:3,4. "Know ye not, that so many of us were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death? 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."
20. *I Cor.* 1:13,14,15,16,17. "Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the house of Stephanas: Besides, I know not whether I baptized any other; for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."
21. *I Cor.* 6: 11. "But ye are washed."

22. *I Cor.* 12:13. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." *This intends, as some suppose, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.
23. *I Cor.* 15:29. "Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead?"
24. *Gal.* 3:27. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."
25. *Eph.* 4:5. "One baptism."
26. *Eph.* 5:26. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."
27. *Col.* 2:12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him."
28. *Titus* 3:5. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."
29. *Heb.* 6:2 "The doctrine of baptisms. **It is not certain that this hath any reference to Christian baptism. If it have, it must not refer to that only. See Doddridge in Loc.
30. *Heb.* 10:22. "Our bodies washed with pure water."
31. *I Peter* 3:21. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.)"

SUMMARY OF VERSES ON BAPTISM

BELIEVERS ARE BOUND BY THE SCRIPTURE. WE MUST ACCEPT ONLY WHAT THE SCRIPTURE STATES, NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS

These, I believe, are all the texts in the New Testament which have a plain and obvious reference to either the baptism of John or of Christ. They afford us the sum of all the knowledge which we can have of either the mode or subjects of Christian baptism.

REFERENCES WHERE "WASHING" IS MENTIONED

[31 Scriptural References]

What these passages say, we may believe; what they do not countenance, we may not believe. I will now set before you those passages where washing is mentioned, and the Greek words which are used.

1. *Matt.* 6:17. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and (*nipsai*) wash thy face."
2. *Matt.* 15:2. "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they (*niptontai*) wash not their hands when they eat bread."
3. *Matt.* 27:24. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and (*apenipsato*) washed his hands."
4. *Mark* 7:2. "And when they saw some of his disciples with defiled, that is to say with (*aniptois*) unwashed hands."
5. Verse 3. "For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they (*nipsontai*) wash their hands oft, they eat not," &c.
6. Verse 4. "When they come from the market, except they (*baptisontai*) wash, they eat not; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the (*baptismous*) washings of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables."
7. Verse 5. "But eat bread with (*aniptois*) unwashed hands."
8. Verse 8. "For, laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the (*baptismous*) washing of pots and cups."
9. *Luke* 5:2. "And they (*apeplunan*) were washing their nets."

10. *Luke* 7:38. "And stood at his feet, behind him, weeping, and began (*brechein*) to wash his feet."

11. Verse 44. "And he turned to the woman, and said to Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she (*ebrexe*) hath washed my feet with tears."

12. *Luke* 11:38. "And when the Pharisees saw it, that he had not first (*ebaptisthe*) washed before dinner."

13. *John* 9:7. "And said unto him, Go, and (*nipsai*) wash in the pool of Siloam;-- he went his way therefore and (*enipsato*) washed."

14. Verse 15. "Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight: he said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I (*enipsamen*) washed and do see."

15. *John* 13:5. "After that he poured water in a basin, and began (*niptein*) to wash the disciples' feet."

16. Verse 6. "And Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou (*nipteis*) wash my feet?"

17. Verse 5(sic.). "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never (*nipses*) wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I (*nipso*) wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

18. Verse 10. "Jesus saith to him, He that is (*oleloumenos*) washed, needeth not save (*nipsasthai*) to wash his feet," &c.

19. Verse 14. "If I then, your Lord and Master, (*enipsa*) have washed your feet, ye also ought (*niptein*) to wash one another's feet."

20. *Acts* 9:37. "And it came to pass in those that she was sick and died, whom when they had (*lousantes*) washed."

21. *Acts* 16:33. "And he took them the same hour of the night, and (*elousen*) washed their stripes."

22. *Acts* 22:16. "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and (*apolousal*) wash away thy sins."

23. *I Cor.* 6:11. "And such were some of you; but ye (*apelousagthe*) are washed."

24. *Eph.* 5:26. "That he might and cleanse it with (*loutro*) the washing of water by the word."

25. *I Tim.* 5:10. "If she (*enipsen*) have washed the saints' feet."

26. *Titus* 3:5. "By the (*loutrou*) washing of regeneration."

27. *Heb.* 9:10. "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and (*diaphorois baptismois*) divers washing."

28. *Heb.* 10:22. "Having our bodies (*leloumenoi*) washed with pure water."

29. *II Peter* 2:22. "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb—and the sow that (*lousamene*) was washed," &c.

30. *Rev.* 1:5. "Unto him that loved us and (*lousanti*) us from our sins in his own blood."

31. *Rev.* 7:14. "These are they who came out of the great tribulation and (*ephunan*) have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb." **Pluno* properly signifies to wash clothes; as *louo*, the body; and *nipte*, the face and hands.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO SPRINKLING

[Six Verses]

Those passages which make mention of SRINKLING, with the Greek words used, now call for your attention.

1. *Heb.* 9:13 "For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer (*rantizousa*) sprinkling the unclean," &c.

2. Verse 19. "He (Moses) took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and (*errantise*) sprinkled both the book and all the people."
3. *Heb.* 10:22. "Having our hearts (*errantismenoi*) sprinkled from an evil conscience."
4. *Heb.* 11:28. "Through faith he kept the passover and the (*proschusin*) sprinkling of blood."
5. *Heb.* 12:24. "And to the blood of (*rantismou*) sprinkling."
6. *I Peter* 1:2. "And to the (*rantismon*) sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO "DIP"

[Five Verses]

Lastly. You will now give attention for a moment those passages of scripture where the word DIP is mentioned.

1. *Luke* 16:24. "That he may (*bapse*) dip his finger in water."
2. *Matt.* 26:23. "And he answered and said, He that (*embapsas*) dippeth his hand with me in the dish."
3. *Mark* 14:20. "And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve that (*embaptomenos*) dippeth with me in the dish."
4. *John* 13:26. "And he answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have (*bapsas*) dipped it; and when he had (*embapsas*) dipped the sop," &c.
5. *Rev.* 19:13. "And he was clothed with a vesture (*behammenon*) dipped in blood."

CONCLUSION OF FIRST SERMON

SOME DISCERNING OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE BIBICAL WORDS THAT ARE USED TO DEFEND OPPOSING MODES OF BAPTISM

A few remarks on what we have passed over will close the present discourse.

1. We see that all the words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism, signify the same which they would, provided immersion were the scripture mode.
2. We see the subject of baptism is very repeatedly mentioned in the New Testament. It is brought to view expressly in about threescore [60] passages.
3. Whenever baptism is mentioned, and neither the word *baptizo* nor *baptismos* is used, the word substituted intimates that bathing or washing the body all over, is the mode; for this is the signification of *louo*, which is the word, and the only word, which the scriptures employ in the room of *baptizo*.
4. Whenever *baptizo* or *baptismos* is translated washing, a ceremonial and not a common washing is manifestly intended.
5. We find that in all the places where sprinkling is mentioned, the original words, are *rantizo*, and *proschusin*, are very different from *baptizo* and *baptismos*.
6. You will be pleased to observe that wherever we find, through the New Testament, the word, to dip, it is from the same theme whence *baptizo* comes.
7. We see that everything looks as though *immersion* might be the *mode*; and, as for *sprinkling*, there is, to say the least, nothing which *looks* like it.