

One (I Corinthians 10:2) is a symbolic usage of BAPTIZO, and tells us nothing about mode.

Two (Mark 7:14, Luke 11:38) speak of Jewish ceremonial cleansings, and therefore tell us nothing about the mode of Christian baptism. However, since according to Jewish tradition these ceremonial cleansings were probably performed by pouring, there two uses place at least a question mark beside the claim that BAPTIZO categorically means immersion.

Thus we conclude that, as far as discovering the mode of baptism from the meaning of BAPTIZO as ascertained by usage in context alone, no definitive conclusion can be reached! This is no doubt a disturbing inference to proponents of each of the three major modes of baptism, but it has a twofold advantage: (1) It is based on a complete induction of all cases; and (2) it takes into account both the grammatical and historical aspects of each relevant Scripture.

b. Historical Considerations as to Mode

(1) Mode of old Testament ceremonial cleansings

Most of the Old Testament ceremonies of purification were accomplished by applying the purifying element to the object to be purified. Sprinkling was the prevailing mode. There are some cases in which clothes were to be washed as part of the ceremony; in such instances the mode was probably immersion. There are some cases in which a person's body was to be washed as part of the ceremony. This washing was accomplished by dipping (TABAL) in one instance (II Kings 5:14), and could have been accomplished by this mode in other instances. This washing of the body was not accomplished by dipping in one ceremony; that of the washing of the body of the high priest in the tabernacle during the ceremonies of atonement, as recorded in Leviticus 16:24. in a few cases pouring was used as part of certain cleansings (e.g., Leviticus 9:9; 14:15, 26).

(2) Mode of Jewish proselyte baptism

Baptism as a ceremony of cleansing was not new to John the Baptizer. Gentiles who desired to become Jews were called proselytes; and were required to be circumcised, to be baptized, and to offer a sacrifice. The practice of proselytizing Gentiles was witnesses to by Christ in Matthew 23:15:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."

Alfred Edersheim, a noted authority on Jewish life and customs, describes proselyte baptism:

"The baptism was to be performed in the presence of three witnesses, ordinarily Sanhedrists, but in case of necessity others might act. The person to be baptized, having cut his hair and