

Mode of Baptism

Introduction— If Baptism in English and Greek means only Immersion, how is it that men like Moses Stuart, Robinson, Barnes, Rice, Hodge, Dabney, Palmer, Stowe, in this country, and Chalmers, Scott, Henry, Baxter and Doddridge of Europe, have not been believers in Immersion? Are our Baptist brethren better Greek scholars than these men? More than nine-tenths of the learned are not Baptists. Are they all hypocrites? Or possibly does Baptism mean something else than Immersion? The Bible must decide, you say. Certainly. How, then, do you account for it, in the:

First place, that there is not one clear case for Baptism by Immersion in the whole Bible? Point to one if you can. Do you cite the baptism of Jesus? Turn to it. We read in Matthew 3:16, "*And Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water.*" Is it here said that he went entirely under the water? Does it say he went in knee-deep? If Jesus had stepped into Jordan knee-deep, or ankle-deep, and John, stooping, had taken up water in his hand to pour on his head, would not the language be just as it is in Matthew 3:16? Look into books on the catacombs of Rome, where the early Christians worshiped under ground in the days of Nero who slew Paul, and you will find a picture of the baptism of Jesus made by these early Christians on the wall. Christ stands in the water, and John with his hand puts water on the head of Jesus.

Will you cite Romans 6:4, as a clear case?— "*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.*" Our burial has a faint resemblance to immersion—though we pour the earth upon the body, never dipping the body into the earth. Do you know how the Romans buried, to whom Paul speaks? They burned their dead, and put the ashes in an urn into the sepulchre. Was that like immersion? How did the Jews bury? in caves and rocks, not in the ground. Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah, and Lazarus in the rock. How was Christ buried? In a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, his body carried on the shoulders of men, and laid on a niche in the wall. If four men took you up, carried you into a room, and laid you on a sofa, would you see in that any likeness to immersion? So Christ was buried. There is no more resemblance in baptism to the burial of Christ than to his crucifixion, spoken of in the next verses: this verse means, that as Christ died, so we by baptism, confessing him, die to the world, and as Christ rose again, so we walk in a new life. There is no reference at all to the mode of baptism.

Try again. Do you cite Ephesians 4:5?— "*One Lord—one faith—one baptism.*" One act of baptism. We are to be baptized once. Does it say by immersion?

Do you fall back on the baptism of the Eunuch? Read the account in Acts 8:36 and 38: "*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 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, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw him no more.*" Did Philip, who also went into the

water, immerse himself? Both went in. If going in proves immersion, both were immersed. How deep did they go in? Can you prove that they went in knee-deep? What river was it? There is only one river in Palestine the Jordan, which is but thirty yards wide. They were in the way "from Jerusalem -unto Gaza, which is desert" (verse 26). There is no river between the two cities; only at intervals a trickling spring; water is scarce, the inhabitants drink from cisterns. If, coming to a rivulet crossing the road, they had left the chariot, stepped into the rivulet or into a pool fed by it, and Philip, taking up water in his hand, had put it on the Eunuch's head, would not the occurrence be described just as it is in these verses? Tradition still points out the spring where the incident transpired. The Eunuch had been reading Isaiah, and he quotes (Acts 8:32) from Isaiah 53:7: "*The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth.*" If you will turn to the passage in Isaiah 53:7, and look just eight verses before, Isaiah 52:15, in the same description of Christ you will read, "*So shall he sprinkle many nations.*" That suggests baptism by sprinkling.

These are the strongest passages the immersers have. How do you account for it that there is not one clear case of baptism by Immersion in the Bible?

II. If I can find in the Bible one clear case of baptism which is not Immersion, then the immersers are proved to be in the wrong. For they claim that baptism only and always means immersion. Suppose we try. Read Mark 7:4: "*And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, and brazen vessels and tables.*" Opening my Greek Testament at this verse, I find the word translated "wash" is "**baptisontai**," baptize. "*Except they baptize, they eat not.*" Whenever "the Pharisees and all the Jews" came from market, did they immerse themselves before they ate? We know their custom. A servant poured water on their hands; this Mark calls baptizing. Reading on in the Greek, the word "washing," I find, is "**baptismous**," "the baptism of cups, pots, brazen vessels and tables." Did the Jewish women immerse their tables every day, or pour on a little water and wash them? Here, then, the Bible calls that baptism which cannot be immersion. Again we read in First Corinthians 10:2: "*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*" The Jews were all baptized in the Red Sea, it seems. How was it done? We are told in Exodus 14:19, as they stood by the Red Sea, "*the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.*" The wall of water was not on each side of them, and the cloud over them, in crossing—as Baptists often assert. The pillar of cloud went from front to rear as they stood on the shore (Psalm 77:17): "*the clouds poured out water,*" says the Psalmist sketching the scene—sprinkling them, "*baptizing them unto Moses in the cloud.*" Then, Exodus 14:22: "The waters were divided, and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left." The Jews marched through the sea upon dry ground, the strong east wind sprinkling them with spray, and "*baptizing them unto Moses in the sea.*" The Jews then were baptized, like Presbyterians, on dry ground, by sprinkling. They were baptized, but not immersed. Now read what is said of the Egyptians, Exodus 15:10:

"Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters." The Egyptians were immersed, In the case of three million Jews, we have a second example of Bible-baptism, which cannot be immersion.

In Matthew 3:11, John prophesied of Christ: *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."* Jesus repeats the promise, Acts 1:5: *"For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."* The prediction was fulfilled, in Acts 2:3: *"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."* A cloven tongue, a drop of fire, sprinkled each head. Here was the promised baptism of fire. Did you ever read that they were immersed in fire? I admit there is one clear case of such immersion. The Sodomites were immersed in the fiery lake of the Dead Sea, but it is not said that they were baptized. If in the Bible there can be found one clear case of baptism which is not immersion, then the dippers are beaten. Here are three such examples. Many others are behind.

Conclusion: In First Peter 3:20, we read that *"God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like-figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,"* I. e., Christ is the ark into which we enter by faith that is professed at baptism. At baptism the Christian is likened to Noah. Noah *"was saved by water."* But it was by carefully keeping out of It. Noah was sprinkled. The Antedeluvians were Immersed.

By: Dr. Chuck Baynard