

Baptism for the Dead

I. A Dispensational Study of 1 Corinthians 15:29

A. To understand this verse, the word “baptize” must first be defined and correctly understood. Within the King James Bible, “**baptize**” means: “**to be immersed, identified with, or to be put into or under, something new or different.**”

B. Bible uses of “baptize” (in its various forms)

1. 1 Cor. 10:1-2 - The nation of Israel was “**baptized unto Moses**” when they were delivered from being identified and ruled by Pharaoh in Egypt to being identified as being under the leadership of Moses, all of which happened without anybody getting wet, i.e. **no water** touching anybody!
2. Matt. 3:1-17; Mark 1:4-8; Luke 3:1-17; John 1:31-34 - John the Baptist preached the **water baptism** of repentance exclusively to the nation of Israel 1) for the remission of sins and 2) to identify (or manifest) Jesus Christ to Israel. (Gospel of the Kingdom)
3. Acts 2:38 - Peter preaching **water baptism** exclusively to the nation of Israel in the name of Jesus Christ for 1) the remission of sins and 2) to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Gospel of the Kingdom)
4. Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4-5; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12 - Believers in the Church Age being **spiritually baptized** by the Holy Spirit and placed into the body of Christ, so as to be identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (**no water**) (Gospel of the Grace of God)
5. Matt. 20:20-23; Mark 10:35-45 - The “**baptism of physical suffering**” to identify with the sacrificial sufferings/death of Jesus Christ which He endured at the Cross of Calvary. (**no water**)

NOTICE: There are other kinds of “**baptism**” in the Bible that have **NOTHING TO DO WITH WATER!**

II. Motivation for this Study

- A. Throughout church history, 1 Corinthians 15:29 has given Bible students much difficulty, primarily because of their pre-conceived notions (arising from church or denominational traditions) that “baptism” in the Bible can **only** be interpreted to mean “**water**” in some form or another.
- B. Those who insist this verse deals with somebody getting water baptized on behalf of someone who is already dead (so they can go to Heaven), have no idea what they are talking about and have never rightly divided or properly understood this verse in its context. There is **no water** in this verse at all!

III. Getting the Context of 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 Right

- A. To properly understand **1 Corinthians 15:29**, we must first realize the context of this entire chapter is the bodily **resurrection** of Jesus Christ and believers.
- B. The fact of Jesus Christ’s resurrection and its absolute necessity to Church Age salvation. - vv. 1-11
- C. The importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. - vv. 12-19
- D. The sequence and facts concerning the resurrections. - vv. 20-28
- E. The consequences of there not being any resurrections. - vv. 29-34
- F. The method and victory of the resurrections. - vv. 35-58

IV. A Biblical Explanation Based on Rightly Dividing

- A. There are two main keys to understanding **1 Corinthians 15:29**:

1) Apply the correct dispensational use of the word “baptize” (from item I.B.5. above). Since there is no water baptism to be found in the Pauline epistles, except as found in **1 Cor. 1:14-17** where Paul clarifies that he had only water baptized a few people (likely a “holdover” from the Gospel of the Kingdom), Paul emphasizes his calling from Jesus Christ was **NOT water baptism**, but rather to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Gospel of the Grace of God).

2) A study of the phrase “**for the dead**” is necessary to properly understand the two uses of this phrase in **1 Corinthians 15:29**. Besides 1 Cor. 15:29, the phrase “**for the dead**” is used eight other times in the Bible (Lev.19:28, 21:1; Deut. 14:1, 26:14; 2 Sam. 14:2; Jer. 16:7, 22:10; Ezek. 24:17). The phrase “**for the dead**” in all eight of these cross-references is most often connected to **mourning**, and sometimes to weeping, defilement, or fleshly suffering, **for someone who has died physically**.

- B. Therefore, the ***Doctrinal Application*** of the phrase “**baptized for the dead**” in 1 Cor. 15:29 would be Paul asking “**If there is no resurrection of the dead**, what is the point of any of us putting our lives in jeopardy and going about mourning, weeping, or suffering in the flesh?” He is also teaching that **if there is no resurrection of the dead**, we ought to just forget about the dead and instead just go out and “eat and drink; for to morrow we die.” (v. 32)

In the context, notice the verses which support this understanding:

- “stand we in jeopardy” - 1 Cor. 15:30
- “I die daily” (daily persecution) - 1 Cor. 15:31
- “fought with beasts at Ephesus” - 1 Cor. 15:32
- “there are many adversaries” - 1 Cor. 16:9

- C. A possible ***Practical Application*** of the phrase “**baptized for the dead**” could be a soul-winner’s “**baptism of physical suffering**” as a living sacrifice given to the Lord to evangelize those who are **spiritually** dead, i.e. those lost in sin. Eph. 2:1-5, 11-12; Col. 2:13; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 1:29, 3:10-14; 1 Tim. 4:10

In this ***practical application***, Paul would be saying:

When considering all the enemies, troubles, strife, and adversaries that soul-winners have to endure, **if there is no resurrection of the dead**, why should they sacrifice, put their lives in jeopardy, and endure all these problems to reach the lost (those spiritually dead in trespasses and sins)? Soul-winners ought to just forget about the lost and instead go out and “eat and drink; for to morrow we die.” (v. 32) In other words, **if there is no resurrection of the dead**, all the difficulties, sufferings, and sacrifices soul-winners go through to win lost souls are pointless and in vain, so we might as well sit back and enjoy ourselves while we still can.