

# Baptism for The Dead (I Cor. 15:29)

**Question:** I have a friend that is an ex Church of God pastor. He asked me to get your thoughts on [1st Corinthians 15:29](#), I believe this is the passage the Mormons cite for being baptized for your ancestors.

**Answer:** The section of Scripture under discussion is [1 Corinthians 15:20-32](#): “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 27 For ‘He has put all things under His feet.’ But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. 29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? 30 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? 31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

Of particular interest is verse 29. Who is “the dead” referred to here?

1. It cannot mean that living people are baptized to save souls of those who have physically died, for Jesus taught that souls after death cannot be changed because of the “great gulf” between the two states ([Luke 16:19-31](#)). Paul, in [Hebrews 9:27-28](#), clearly taught there is nothing after one’s death but the judgment to come;

2. Certainly it cannot mean that unsaved persons can save the lost souls by being immersed in water, for Jesus told a would-be disciple “let the dead bury their own dead” ([Matthew 8:21-22](#)), that is, let those who, under the Law of Moses, don’t respect God’s ordinance of cleanliness after touching a dead body ([Numbers 19:11-22](#)) bury a corpse. Following Jesus should be more important than the delay of burying a dead person’s body;

3. In [1 Corinthians 15:20-32](#), the doctrine is stated that Jesus Christ rose from the grave never to “die” again ( [1 Cor 15:20-23](#) ), and now reigns over His people until death, itself, is destroyed ([1 Cor 15:24-28](#)). Baptism in water is essential for entering Jesus’ kingdom and being one of His obedient disciples ([Matthew 7:21](#); [Matthew 28:18-20](#); [John 3:5](#); [Acts 8:12](#); [Acts 18:8](#)). Baptism is a burial into Jesus’ death, but then one is raised from it (resurrection) to a new life in Christ ([Romans 6:3-5](#)). If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead, then baptism could not be the point of cleansing from sin by Jesus’ death to arise as a cleansed creature ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). IF Jesus had not been raised from the dead, then what appeal should baptism have? In other words, baptism becomes a meaningless symbol if Jesus Christ were not raised ([1 Corinthians 15:12-19](#)), and those who now were dead (at the time Paul wrote, [1 Corinthians 15:6](#)) would have been baptized for nothing! Paul’s statement in [1 Corinthians 15:29](#) is simply showing a consequence of stripping the resurrection of Jesus Christ out of the Gospel and stating the obvious: why be baptized to enter a dead man, Jesus, if, indeed, He was not raised from the dead Himself?

The Mormon doctrine of baptizing someone to “save” a departed spirit certainly qualifies as “water salvation,” for it puts salvation of a soul purely on the cleaning in the water and not the obedience of the one who is supposedly saved! In that sense, there is no difference in the concept of Roman Catholicism’s “Purgatory” and Mormonism’s “Baptism for the Dead.” There is no mystical, magical cleansing of any soul who has left this life, according to Jesus, and whatever practice(s) people may invent to claim it, must be false.

—<mailto:gpreacherBlog@gmail.com>—