

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: 1 Cor 15:29****1 Cor 15:29 - posted by matthew (), on: 2004/4/29 9:58**

Why does Paul use the baptism of the dead as a support of the resurrection? By not condemning the process is he condoning it?

**Re: 1 Cor 15:29 - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/4/29 10:56**

Paul is talking about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Those who become disciples of Jesus will follow Him to the cross. The cross of Christ will crucify the old man in us. Meaning that all we hold as truth in terms of self centeredness will be cast out as rubbish. Our reliance on our carnal ways will be brought to our attention by the Holy Spirit. If we follow the Holy Spirit, the washing of the Spirit in our lives will become the baptism of death to our flesh. This baptism into death is on going. It is a process called sanctification. "I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, **I die daily.**" 1 Corinthians 15:31. If you are led by the Spirit you will experience this same baptism of death. And it happens daily.

In Christ  
Jeff

**Re: - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2004/4/29 11:23**

1Cor 15:29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?

Paul is not establishing a religious practice as the Mormons think when they use this verse. Baptism does not bring salvation, but is a public confession and identification with Jesus Christ. What better way to publicly pronounce your faith but to symbolically go down in death and then be raised again? Paul, as Jeff put it, is defending the resurrection, not instituting a new religious rite. Stanley Horton's commentary on this passage states it this way:

Quote:  
-----Paul further challenges those who deny bodily resurrection by pointing to a practice that some carried out. Paul does not explain why people were "baptized for the dead." He simply wants them to see that such a baptism, which pictures death and resurrection, is meaningless if there is no resurrection. One suggestion is that certain new converts died before they could be baptized. Their pagan relatives wanted to give them a heathen funeral, but another Christian was baptized in their stead to tell the world that this is what the dead believer would have done. This would be a means of claiming the body for Christian burial. It was probably a short-lived local practice. By the time of John Chrysostom (A.D. 345-407) some were saying Paul meant they were being baptized for themselves because they were dead in sins. Others have taken it to mean a present baptism of trial and suffering.  
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If Baptism was essential to salvation then we would have expected Paul to have stressed it in his ministry, but 1Cor 1:14-17 states:

"I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel..."

The importance of baptism is not that it brings salvation--because it doesn't--but that it is a public confession of faith in Christ.

In Christ,  
Jeremy Hulsey

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/4/29 12:54**

Matthew posted this in reply:

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My concern is with the language used. He says they are baptized FOR the dead (in all KJV, NIV, and NASB) not a baptism OF death.

I see there being a marked difference.

thanks for your consideration...

matt

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NOTE: when replying to a thread simply click on a reply button to the message that you want to reply to.

**Re: baptism for the dead - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/29 14:27**

This is one of the most obscure verses in the New Testament and I could not count the times I have been asked what it means; Â'though it must run into hundreds!

What follows is not intended to be the final word on the matter, but is simply my Â'state of the artÂ' understanding. First, a couple of observations.

1. Some have suggested that Paul is not necessarily commending the practise but simply using it as an illustration. I find it difficult to imagine Paul using a dubious practice as an argument for such a vital truth.

2. "for the dead" is "uper tOn nekrOn"

"uper" used with the genitive does have the sense of "on behalf of" but "on behalf of" does not necessarily mean "instead of". I can act as your representative without being your substitute. I may act as a representative of my country without acting 'in stead of' my country. Proxy baptism is not known in church history, except as a result of misinterpreting this passage. Baptism as proxies for individuals would be "uper nekrOn", but "uper tOn nekrOn" implies "for the dead" generally and collectively. This is clearly not Â'one for oneÂ' proxy baptism. (This is important in what follows.)

So, on the basis that "baptism for the dead" cannot mean in the stead of individuals who have died, what can it mean?

"the dead" in this sense would have the same sense as "so great a death" of 2 Cor 1:10, ie spiritual death. Spirit Baptism is baptism into "HIS death", where "death made of no effect him who had the power of death, that is, the devil". In other words all water baptism is "baptism for the dead" as a class not as individuals, but with the expectancy of new life, or spiritual resurrection. Baptism is the burial of the Corpse of Sin and a public demonstration of the Resurrection as a New Man. Although it is a personal declaration it is also a corporate expression of the end of the old and the beginning of the new in Christ, in His Body and in the individual. Each individual baptised is a representative of the whole company of the dead; in his individual act the whole truth is being proclaimed. Every baptism is a public burial of the old with a guarantee of the new in resurrection. ". Our water baptism represents our Spirit Baptism into "the death of death", and consequently has the connotation of "from death into life".

All baptism, symbolically is INTO death, symbolising the Spirit Baptism INTO HIS death Rom 6:3. Only dead people are buried, so water baptism symbolises baptism INTO death, but UNTO life Rom 6:4. Water baptism is a public representation of The Resurrection that has followed The Death. In the Church's vocabulary "Death" is not the end, but is a beginning. This is not only true in spiritual terms because the coming of the Spirit (prefigured in water baptism) is the guarantee of the body's ultimate redemption. Rom 8:11,23.

'we know in part'

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/4/29 15:06**

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Psalm 116:15

In Christ

Jeff

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/5/10 11:32**

Matt had chosen one of the most obscure passages in the NT. There are up to 200 different explanations for this passage, a summary of which is given in K. C. Thompson, "I Corinthians 15,29 and Baptism for the Dead," *Studia Evangelica* 2.1 (TU 87), 647-59. Gordon Fee comments, "when there is such a wide divergence of opinion, no one knows what in fact was going on." This is probably an honest and realistic assessment.

Allowing for other possible interpretations, I favour a less *spiritualised* understanding of the phrase "baptized for the dead," especially since the context in view is discussing the **bodily** resurrection. I shall cite evangelical exegete Gordon Fee again -

Quote:  
-----The normal reading of the text is that some Corinthians are being baptized, apparently vicariously, in behalf of some people who have already died. It would be fair to add that this reading is such a plain understanding of the Greek text that no one would ever have imagined the various alternatives were it not for the difficulties involved. (Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, pp. 763-764)  
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If we accept this, then the logical conclusion would be that: "there is a genuine idiosyncrasy in the history of the church, known and practiced by some in the Corinthian community... The point Paul is making in this verse is reasonably clear: what some people in Corinth believed affected how they lived. The doctrine of the resurrection and this baptismal practice are related. Their belief does not have to be true for Paul to make his point. They acted in accord with what they believed." (Rodney J. Decker, Calvin Theological Seminary)

Regardless of how you interpret this verse, it is quite clear that such a practice cannot be found in any other historical document in the NT, in early church history, nor in any orthodox Christian community in the centuries that immediately followed; nor are there parallels or precedents in pagan religion (Fee, 764).

**Re: Proxy Baptism? - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/5/10 15:22**

Gordon Fee has written The normal reading of the text is that some Corinthians are being baptized, apparently vicariously, in behalf of some people who have already died.

I don't accept the validity of this. For reasons I have stated before but repeat here. I would not put my Greek head-to-head with Gordon Fee if it were not for the fact that my Greek authority is William Wordsworth, one of the greatest Greek scholars of the 19th century.

"for the dead" is "uper tOn nekrOn"

"uper tOn nekrOn" has the sense of 'the dead' as a class rather than as individuals. "uper" used with the genitive does have the sense of "on behalf of" but "on behalf of" does not necessarily mean "instead of". I can act as your representative without being your substitute. I may act as a representative of my country without acting 'in stead of' my country. Proxy baptism is not known in church history, except as a result of misinterpreting this passage. Baptism as proxies for individuals would be "uper nekrOn", but "uper tOn nekrOn" implies "for the dead" generally and collectively. This is clearly not 'one for one' proxy baptism.

I know that Fee has a world-wide reputation but I find him a little 'cavalier' in quite a few of his judgments. Just my opinion.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/5/10 15:55

I see 1 Corinthians 15 summarized by the following verses:

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give **life to your mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you." Romans 8:11

'...if by the Spirit you **you put to death the deeds of the body**, you will live." Romans 8:13

'...if indeed **we suffer with Him**, that we may also **be glorified together**." Romans 8:17

Precious is the death of His saints! Those who follow Him will be baptized for the dead. Paul cries out to the Corinthians, "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." 1 Corinthians 15:34.

I agree with Philologos' explanation. We are the brotherhood of Christ and Him crucified.

In Christ  
Jeff

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/5/11 9:39

Hi Philologos / Jeff,

As I said, my main point is that there are up to 200 different explanations of this passage according to some, and a summary of some of these can be found in K. C. Thompson, "I Corinthians 15,29 and Baptism for the Dead," *Studia Evangelica* 2.1 (TU 87), 647-59.

Hence, it is fair for Gordon Fee to say that, "when there is such a wide divergence of opinion, **no one knows what in fact was going on**."

The rest is simply a brief explanation of why I favour one of these interpretations. I am quite open to other possibilities; and I certainly respect your input. My Koine Greek is not good enough to discern the more detailed intricacies concerning the phrase *baptising for the dead*, it is an area I will strive to improve on. Nevertheless, with such an obscure passage, I think it is best not to be too dogmatic -- I like Philologos' humble admission, "we know in part."

I think we can at least agree that **no significant doctrine should be built upon this verse alone, as the Mormons had done**. This point was already emphasised in my previous post (which seems to be overlooked) - "*it is quite clear that such a practice cannot be found in any other historical document in the NT, in early church history, nor in any orthodox Christian community in the centuries that immediately followed; nor are there parallels or precedents in pagan religion (Fee, 764)*".

As for the spiritual experiences of being baptised "**into death**" and of "**dying daily**" in Christ and for Christ, these are experiences that I strongly believe in and by God's grace, experience myself. Experiencing Christ and him crucified is the way of the cross! I just think that these are the subjects of Romans 6-8, not 1 Corinthians 15:29.

Sam

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/5/11 10:09

I think we can at least agree that no significant doctrine should be built upon this verse alone, as the Mormons had done. This point was already emphasised in my previous post (which seems to be overlooked) - "*it is quite clear that such a practice cannot be found in any other historical document in the NT, in early church history, nor in any orthodox Christian community in the centuries that immediately followed; nor are there parallels or precedents in pagan religion (Fee, 764)*".

Hi Sam,

For my part it wasn't overlooked but was implicitly agreed as a 'given'. I think I may have said that the only records of proxy baptisms are those caused by misinterpretations of this verse.

So for my part.. agreed, absolutely.

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/5/11 10:29**

Philologos says, "*So for my part.. agreed, absolutely.*" Your point is noted. :)

Quote:  
-----I don't accept the validity of this. For reasons I have stated before but repeat here. I would not put my Greek head-to-head with Gordon Fee if it were not for the fact that my Greek authority is William Wordsworth, one of the greatest Greek scholars of the 19th century.  
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This is an aside. Can you point me to the actual book of the "Greek authority" that you have mentioned? As far as I know, William Wordsworth was a British poet, not a Greek scholar. He did have a youngest brother by the name of Christopher who appeared to have done some work in New Testament Greek. Anyways, I'm confused as to where to look in the library.

Sam

**Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2004/5/11 10:38**

Hi Sam

You wrote:

"I think we can at least agree that no significant doctrine should be built upon this verse alone, as the Mormons had done."

I was unaware of this use of Scripture. I found out that the holocaust Jews are posthumously (sp) being baptized into the mormon religion. The living survivors are trying to stop the mormons from doing this. Thankyou for your thoughts.

In Christ  
Jeff

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/5/11 14:58**

Hi Sam

Call it a 'senior moment'. I meant Christopher Wordsworth of course. He was Bishop of Lincoln. (I think he was nephew to William) I was referring to his 2 volume commentary on the Greek New Testament, published by Rivingtons, London c 1886. It is one of my favourite source books. He was a high church sacramentalist but a great lover of the scripture. He also did the OT in 6 volumes; I have that too.

WORDSWORTH, CHRISTOPHER (1807-1885), English bishop and man of letters, youngest son of Christopher Wordsworth, Master of Trinity, was born in London on the 30th of October 1807, and was educated at Winchester and Trinity, Cambridge. He, like his brother Charles, was distinguished as an athlete as well as for scholarship. He became senior classic, and was elected a fellow and tutor of Trinity in 1830; shortly afterwards he took holy orders. He went for a tour in Greece in 1832-1833, and published various works on its topography and archaeology, the most famous of which is "Wordsworth's" Greece (1839). In 1836 he became Public Orator at Cambridge, and in the same year was appointed headmaster of Harrow, a post he resigned in 1844. He then became a canon of Westminster, and from 1850 to 1870 he held a country living in Berkshire. In 1865 he was made archdeacon of Westminster, and in 1869 bishop of Lincoln. He died on the 20th of March 1885. He was a man of fine character, with a high ideal of ecclesiastical duty, and he spent his money generously on church objects. As a scholar he is best known for his edition of the Greek New Testament (1856-1860), and the Old Testament (1864-1870), with commentaries; but his writings were many in number, and included a volume of devotional verse, The Holy Year (1862), Church History up to A.D. 451 (1881-1883), and Memoirs of his uncle the poet (1851), to whom he was literary executor. His Inscriptiones Pompeianae (1837) was an important contribution to epigraphy. He married in 1838 Susanna Hartley Frere (d. 1884), and had a family of seven; the-elderest son was John (b. 1843), bishop of Salisbury (1885), and author of Fragments of Early Latin (1874); the eldest daughter, Elizabeth (b. 1840), was the first principal (1879) of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/5/13 13:38**

To Jeff,

Thanks to you likewise for pointing out the facts regarding Holocaust Jews being baptised by Mormons.

The Mormons' unbiblical practice of baptising for the dead also had an unintended contribution to historical research on genealogy. They have the most comprehensive database on North American genealogy. My senior friend was able to trace her family tree hundreds of years back because of this database.

Other than this, there is no spiritual value of eternal significance to this practice. :)

To Philologos,

Thanks for the info on Wordsworth. I really have to work hard on my Greek before I could dig into his writings.

Sam

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/5/14 5:06**

Hi Sam

To Philologos,

Thanks for the info on Wordsworth. I really have to work hard on my Greek before I could dig into his writings.

Sam

They're not quite as inaccessible as you might think, although if you don't have Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Latin, High German and French you (and me) will miss some things. :-o He was writing for an audience of Bible scholars who he expected to have such tools in their scholastic skill-set. Those were the days! Have you been able to locate a copy?

Regarding Mormons, they have been populating their database for many years now. I recall that way back in the 50s the Anglican church (in a sleepy parish in the centre of England) I attended as a young teenager had regular requests for information from church baptism and death registers from the Mormons.

For any folk tracing genealogies they have by far the most complete databases in the world. This all stemmed from their practice of tracing their ancestors in order to conduct proxy baptisms. Mormons believe in 3 ultimate states, as far as I recall, the top ranking is reserved for practising Mormons, and the third level for all others. However, if you get a Mormon to submit to proxy baptism for someone who is dead, the dead person gets an immediate promotion to the second level. It's a long time since I studied Mormonism, but I think the above is the general shape of their teaching.