

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

Baptism of the dead?

- **Six Possible Interpretations:**

- Most scholars think Paul is speaking of a vicarious form of baptism in which living Christians were baptized on behalf of persons who had already died
- Metaphorical baptism referring to the apostles who are suffering and dying for the church
- The dead is referring to the apostles
- The dead refers to our own dying bodies
- “Luther considered the Baptism to be regular Christian Baptism and explained that the purpose of the practice of baptizing over the graves of deceased Christians was to strengthen the faith of the Corinthians in the reality of the bodily resurrection.” // Lockwood, *1 Corinthians* (p. 576). Concordia Pub. House.

- That man would rise again and that body and soul would be reunited, of that they knew nothing at all. In view of this, it was hard for them at first to believe the apostles’ proclamation; and those who believed it had to endure much ridicule. And so, in order to strengthen this article among the people, they had themselves baptized at the graves of the dead in token of their firm conviction that the dead who lay buried there and over whom they were being baptized would rise again....That is what these people did with their method of baptizing, and that is what we, too, do with other similar signs. For example, we escort the dead to their graves with honor, walk behind the corpse, sing and pray in profession and token of the belief that these same dead, and we with them, will rise on the Last Day and that these will be the same bodies, though they will be changed and glorified. // Luther

- Lenski interprets it as the dead believers who have been baptized provide inspiration or example that others want to follow leading to themselves being baptized.

- Paul is not approving or promoting this practice; he is pointing out the Corinthian hypocrisy of rejecting the bodily resurrection of the dead.
- No where in the history of the Christian church is this practice done or written about nor is it discussed anywhere in the New Testament.

The Resurrection and Ministry

- Paul’s argument is that if the dead are not raised then the apostles need to reconsider their lives and ministries.
- Paul references his suffering for Christ especially the resistance he faced in Ephesus.
 - “From Syria all the way to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts on land and sea, by night and day, chained amidst ten leopards (that is, a company of soldiers).” // Bishop Ignatius of Antioch
 - *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.* // 1 Corinthians 16:8-9
- Paul quotes Isaiah 22 when the people of God when they gave up hope in the face of their enemies, the Assyrians.
- Paul quotes Menander, a pagan poet, to mock the Corinthians and their lack of belief in the resurrection of the body.
- 1 Corinthians 15:58