

What is “Baptism for the Dead?”

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Mormons believe in baptizing for the dead and quote 1 Cor. 15:29 to back up their belief: “Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?”

This is the only Scripture in the Bible that refers to baptism for the dead. Always look at the context before drawing a conclusion on doctrine. In 1 Corinthians 15, the context shows that Paul is teaching about the resurrection of the body, not baptism.

The Marcionites and other heretical groups (cults) practiced baptism of the dead, but denied the resurrection of the body. Paul addresses those groups who baptized for the dead and showed how this practice contradicted what they believed about the resurrection. He said in effect, “If there is no resurrection, then why are you baptizing for the dead since according to your belief they won’t be raised?”

Paul did not endorse the practice of baptism for the dead, but distanced himself from it. Throughout the whole chapter Paul speaks in terms of “you” “we” and “us.”

In 1 Cor. 15:29 he says, “what will **those** do which are baptized for the dead...why then are **they** baptized for the dead.” In verse 29 he is talking about a religious group outside the Christian community.

In 1 Cor. 15:30 he returns to “we” and says, “Why are **we** also in danger every hour?” This shows that he was not in agreement with the practice of baptizing for the dead.