

# REBUTTAL FOR BAPTISM OF THE DEAD

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## 1 Corinthians 15:29

"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?"

The practice of being baptized for those who have died is based upon a wrong understanding of 1 Corinthians 15:29. The Early Church did not follow this practice, and the apostle Paul did not teach it as doctrine.

This custom was introduced into the professing Christian world about A.D. 150 by a man named Marcion who created his own religion and established his own church in Rome in AD 144. Marcion and his followers were Gnostics and had heretical beliefs that included the baptism for the dead, which originated in pagan rituals.

Interesting history. Just north of Corinth (the location of the Corinthian Church), was a city named Eleusis. This was the location of a pagan religion where baptism in the sea was practiced to guarantee a good afterlife. This religion was mentioned by the ancient historian Homer in 'Hymn to Demeter'. The Corinthians were known to be heavily influenced by other customs. After all, they were located in a large economic area where a great many different people frequented. It is probable that they were being influenced by the religious practices found at Eleusis where baptism for the dead was practiced.

I can find seven reasons why it is unscriptural and an erroneous practice:

**(1)** It is a law of Scripture that every doctrine must be proved by two or more scriptures.

2 Corinthians 13:1

Matthew 18:16

Deuteronomy 19:15-18 - This verse is the only one found in either Testament that casually mentions this subject. It doesn't qualify for a doctrine.

**(2)** The Corinthians were in many errors and heresies as the Apostle Paul states in chapter 11 verse 19 and baptism for the dead was only one of

them.

**(3)** The doctrine of water baptism found in Scripture does not save a living man who repents and meets the gospel conditions of salvation.

On all recorded occasions, confessions of sin was required and made before water baptism.

Matthew 3:8

Mark 1:5

Luke 3:8-14

Only believers were baptized after repentance and faith in Christ and in some cases after receiving the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19

Mark 16:16

Acts 2:38

Acts 9:17-18

Acts 10:44-48

Christ, who knew no sin, was baptized for two reasons:

One is to fulfill all righteousness and, two, is to be manifested to Israel.

According to **1 Peter 3:21**, water baptism is only symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and **1 Corinthians 1:13-21** tells us that it is not essential to salvation. Therefore, it could not save a dead man who did not meet conditions while he was alive.

Luke 13:1-5

Romans 10:9-10

Ephesians 2:8-9

**(4)** Salvation is a personal matter and cannot be obtained by proxy.

Mark 16:16

John 3:16-20

Acts 3:19

Romans 1:16

Revelations 22:17

**(5)** There is no command or example of baptism for the dead in Scripture.

**(6)** The simple truth is that Paul is here showing the inconsistency of false

teachers at Corinth in denying the doctrine of the resurrection and yet accepting the fallacy of baptism for the dead. He does not sanction such a doctrine or practice just because he makes one passing reference to this error.

**(7)** One might as well believe there is no resurrection of the dead on the basis of false teachers saying there is none (v.12), as to believe in their practice of baptism for the dead (v. 29). Both are error. Let's look closer at the words used in this Scripture.

Paul used this example from the pagans when he said, 'if the dead are not raised, then why are they baptized for the dead?' Paul did not say we. This is significant because the Christian Church was not practicing baptism for the dead, but the Gnostics and the pagans were.

Paul has been talking about the resurrection in the entire chapter and his point that he was trying to make was simple: The resurrection is a reality. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead and receive a glorified body and it will happen again at His return for His Bride. If there is no resurrection, then what is the point of baptizing for the dead? It's all about the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, NOT a new doctrine approving the pagan practice of baptism for those already dead.

The Apostle Paul was a very intelligent and learned man. His choice of words used here is very interesting. He was able to address the error of baptism for the dead and at the same time drive home the point about the true doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

How?

The word he used that is translated 'for' is the Greek word 'huper' and it has several different meanings--above, over, instead of, for the realization of, or for the hope of; depending on the context it is used in.

For example, **Philippians 2:13**, For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. As in 1 Corinthians 15:29, the Greek word translated 'for' is huper. In Philippians 2:13, huper cannot mean 'instead of'. It would be senseless to say, 'For it is God who works in you both to will and to do instead of His good pleasure'. Correctly translated, it means, 'God works in you both to will and to do for the realization of His good pleasure'. [The Analytical Greek Lexicon]

What is God's good pleasure? It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom, says Jesus in [Luke 12:32](#). God works in us 'in the hope of giving us His Kingdom!

Thus, according to the context, *huper* in 1 Corinthians 15:29 is not correctly translated from the original Greek text into English. It should be translated 'for the hope of'. Notice this verse again: 'Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the hope of the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they then baptized for the hope of the dead'?

What is the hope of the dead? The RESURRECTION! Baptism illustrates the hope of the resurrection! One who is baptized rises out of a watery grave, symbolic of the resurrection. Paul is saying, 'What good is it to be baptized if we do not rise in a resurrection from the dead? Why then should one be baptized for a hope that would never come true?'

However, Paul affirms that, because Christ died and rose again, we have this true hope, the resurrection, to look forward to. This verse, then, has nothing to do with the false doctrine of baptism on behalf of the un-baptized dead, but everything to do with the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.