

Q. What is baptism for the dead? (1 Cor. 15 : 29).

A. Many extravagant interpretations of this passage have been made, including that which allows Mormons to be baptised for their relatives who have died not having adopted the Mormon beliefs. The meaning of the verse is shown by its context. Some of the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of the dead. Paul shows them the inevitable consequences of such a doctrine. It meant the denial of the resurrection of Christ. He says in verse 13, 'But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.' Again in verse 16, 'For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.' He further asks, if this be true, what is the use of baptism, since its validity depends on a resurrected Christ? (See Rom. 6 : 4-5 ; Col. 2 : 12). 'Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?' They have been baptised into a dead Christ; 'why are they then baptised for the dead?' (verse 29). And if this were all true, then there was a still more serious consequence: they were still in their sins (see verse 17). He therefore asks ironically, 'And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?' (verse 30). Put simply, the argument runs: no resurrection of the dead: Christ not raised: baptism useless: no remission of sins.