

Dear Darryl,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You stated that some Bible teachers say that because Paul used the words “they” or “those” in 1 Corinthians 15:29 instead of the word “we” as he used in 1 Corinthians 15:30 that he was talking about heretical groups getting baptized for the dead. You asked what it meant to be baptized for the dead and if members of the true church are baptized for the dead. Lastly, you asked why Paul used the words “they” or “those” in verse 29 and “we” in verse 30.

“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? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?” (1 Corinthians 15:29-30 NIV)

We do not believe that the Apostle Paul was referring to heretical groups being baptized for the dead. We believe that Paul was speaking to the true church when he asked them three rhetorical questions.

In the first two questions Paul is asking if there were no resurrection of the dead, why be baptized at all? What would be the role of faithful ones (Christ’s church) who achieved heavenly status? What work would they be doing in heaven? What about the billions who died and are not in heaven? We believe, as did Paul, that the church’s job in the Millennial age will be to bring the rest of the world of mankind back from their graves and teach them righteousness. If there were to be no awakening of the dead, what would be the point of the church’s sacrifice in order to achieve a place in heaven? Paul is combating and disproving the theories of some who were teaching that there would be no resurrection. “This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3)

Paul’s last question becomes even more personal when he uses the third person singular, rather than the third person plural and asks, “Why do we endanger ourselves every hour?” We believe that he was alluding to the danger or jeopardy that the true child of God encounters from without and from within. When Paul says in verse 31 that he dies daily, he is not only speaking about himself, but also about all who are laying down their lives in the Lord’s service. Each person who has been baptized into Christ’s death did so without reservation. That sacrifice will continue day by day until all is consumed upon the Lord’s altar when the true Christian passes from death to life eternal.

Are members of the true church baptized for the dead? Yes, they are baptized into the body of Christ so that during the Millennial age they will be instrumental in not only bringing the dead back to life, but also back into harmony with God and his righteousness. Why did Paul use the word “they” in verse 29 and “we” in verse 30? He made a general statement about what the role of the church will be in the Millennial kingdom in verse 29 and a personal statement about what each member of the body of Christ must do to attain immortal status in verse 30.

We hope we have answered your questions. Be sure to sign up for CQ rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio