

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 2 - Study 7 **1Peter 4:6 ...Jesus preached the gospel to them that are dead.**
C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: **1Corinthians 15:29) Else what shall they do
which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?**

Studies – Behold...a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

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These are brief studies, not
“teachings” or “doctrines.

Volume 2, Study 7

Jesus preached the gospel to them that are dead. (1Peter 4:6)

This study is about Jesus preaching to the dead after the crucifixion, about resurrection, and about the type of spiritual body to be resurrected. That which is described below regarding Christ Jesus as descended into the earth occurred in the final three days before his resurrection, the last three days before Easter Morning.

1Corinthians 15:1,2) Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

15:3-6) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

15:7) After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

15:8-10) And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

15:11) Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

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**15:12) Now [therefore] if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?**

As now so it was then that there were challenges to fundamental Christian doctrine. And we know, even out of the Apostle Paul's arguments for the correct doctrine of Christ's resurrection, that today there are misguided folk who are baptized for their dead ones. All the verses presented in this study deal with Christ's death and resurrection.

**15:13) But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.**

'and your faith is also vain' here in this verse refers to verse 2 '**unless ye have believed in vain**'. In verse 2, Paul was not stating that these Christians really *could have believed in vain*, for true belief (i.e. Biblical faith) cannot be in vain. Instead in verse 2, Paul was preparing the reader in advance for this discussion about Christ Jesus' resurrection.

To say it differently: If these Christians believed in what was declared to them by either Paul or the other apostles, and if their believing was in vain (i.e. it did not really bring them salvation) then it was not their fault, but was the fault of God...in that Christ did not rise again to conquer death...'**and our preaching [was in] vain**'.

**15:15) Yea, and we [apostles] are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of**

**God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.**

**15:16,17) For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is [in] vain [i.e. worthless]; ye are yet in your sins.**

**15:18) Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished [along with all mankind]. [And] If in this life only we [apostles] have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.**

I.e. The apostles were most miserable in their trials and hardships, if it is all for naught.

**15:20) But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.**

Note the word '**firstfruits**' (plural). There shall be two resurrections; see Revelation 20.

In the first resurrection there will be no judgment of those resurrected, but they shall be judged in the second resurrection.

**15:21) For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.**

That is, through Christ's resurrection God worked resurrection for '**all**' mankind, in that there shall be a second resurrection unto judgment of '**all**'. I shall not get into teachings of hell and heaven, etc. Yet, it is clear that resurrection is about resurrection '**of the dead**'.

**15:22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: (1) Christ [Jesus] the firstfruits; (2) afterward they that are Christ's at his coming [i.e. the first resurrection].**

In verse 28 is the second resurrection described in Revelation 20:7-15 when all the dead and those still living shall come up before God in the judgment.

**15:24) Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom [i.e. Christ Jesus' kingdom] to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign [a thousand years], till he hath put all enemies under his feet.**

**15:26) The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.**

The destruction of death was accomplished in Christ Jesus' resurrection, in which many '**fruits**' of God to mankind also were accomplished with most of them yet to be fulfilled.

**15:27) For [at that time] he [i.e. the Son] hath put all things under his feet. But when he [i.e. God the Father] saith [i.e. in prophesy that] all things are put under him, it is manifest that he [i.e. the Son] is excepted, which did put all things under him.**

**15:28) And when all things shall be subdued unto him [i.e. the Son], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [i.e. God the Father] that put all things under him [i.e. the Son], that God may be all in all.**



**15:29) Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?**

There are people today who are baptized for the dead. This is a primary topic of this study, but before dealing with this verse we must see what the Apostle Peter had to say about Jesus' death and Jesus visiting '**the dead**'.

By the time that Paul began his ministry (see Volume 2, Study 6) Peter was well known and his teachings were being circulated to the scattered and spreading Church. Peter was seeking out Israelite synagogues, mostly east of Israel where so many of the scattered Israelites lived. Of course, Paul was going where Peter had not yet been. But by the time of this writing to the Corinthians, Peter's teachings were well known. And so in this verse Paul used Peter's teaching, which is below -

**1Peter 3:17,18) For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:**

Paul shall use Peter's teaching of '**death in the flesh**' and '**quickened by the Spirit**' in

1Corinthians 15. That is, the man Jesus was **'put to death in his flesh'**. Whereupon Jesus' body became transformed **'quickened by the Spirit'** into something quite different from his earthly body. In Acts 2:31 Peter preached in the Spirit that Jesus' soul was not left in hell (i.e. hades) and his body did not see corruption (as a normal corpse would see).

**3:19) By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;**

By **'being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit'** Jesus **'went and preached unto the spirits in prison'**. (Paul will speak of corpses, while here Peter says that they have spirits.)

**3:20) Which [spirits] sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited [for the people to turn to Him] in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.**

**3:21) The like figure [of Noah in the ark] whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:**

The picture that Peter wants us to get from the Noah Flood has several points:

- 1) Noah was saved by water, a picture of Christian baptism by (in) water. Yet, too many in the early Church thought of baptism as giving them "ceremoniously clean flesh, and as a result that their flesh was good". Yes, the Noah Flood had cleansed the land of filth to give it a new clean beginning. However, the ongoing attitude toward Christian baptism should be for the Christian to focus on having a good conscience toward God and not to think of the flesh as being clean, for we are to walk by the spirit and not by the flesh.
- 2) Going through the obedience of baptism **'doth also now save us... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ'**. It is not the baptism, but the resurrection that saves us. Pointing back to Noah, it was being in the ark in the water that points to baptism, but it was the emergence out of the ark (thus out of the water) that points to resurrection.
- 3) Consider again verse 19, Noah in the ark points to Jesus in his death and quickened by the Spirit. Noah emerging out of the ark onto dry ground points to Jesus' resurrection into heaven. The Noah story was done in the physical which points to Jesus in the Spirit. Noah and his family were not saved or safe until they emerged from the ark. Thus are we in Christ as the Father has joined us into the resurrection of His Son.

**3:22) Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.**

**4:5,6) Who [i.e. every person] shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged [also as] according to men in the flesh, but [might] live according to God in the spirit.**

In other words, all who heard the Gospel preached, the dead and the living, were given the opportunity to respond that they might **'live according to God in the spirit'**. For all shall **'be judged'** and **'shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead'**.

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Now we return to 1Corinthians 15:29 -

15:29) Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

This verse was first translated in the English by the King James translators, and this translation has withstood the test of time; i.e. all English translations of the verse of which I am aware are essentially the same.

So what does this verse (so stated) mean? Answer: I do not know. I am unaware of any

other Bible passages that might go with what it seems to be saying.

In this chapter is one of Paul's great Christian theological arguments. Thus, it seems strange that he would introduce the concept "that living people are baptized for the dead", which concept is nowhere else in scripture. OR he was saying something different: another point that he was weaving into his ongoing argument about the doctrine of resurrection.

First (before again considering what we have just done in Peter's teaching) we shall for the time being assume that Paul was continuing his argument as in the above verses of chapter 15. And I shall delve into the Greek words in this verse as numbered by Strong and delve into their meanings given by Strong. And I will be using their primary meanings.

To begin with, I checked into the order of the words in the verse, and the translation has them faithful to the order of the original text.

The Greek word for '**what**' is a pronoun: *who, what, which*. A pronoun refers to a person, a thought, or a thing. Staying with Paul's whole argument about Christ and resurrection: if we were to select the word *who* then the person would be Christ. If we were to select the word *what* then the subject would be *what Christ did*. If we would select the word *which* it would be the same.

The Greek word for '**shall do**' is a verb *to make or do*.

A Greek word for '**they**' is not in the original text, nor are the words '**which are**'.

Therefore, we have a *who* or a *what* that has *made or done* something.

The next Greek word is '**baptize**' or '**baptism**' and it means *to make fully wet*. Example: When preparing to eat, in a vessel of specially prepared water the Jews would '**baptize**' their arms up to just above their elbows. Some modern teachers explain that the word means *to dip*, which is a good word for it; but perhaps *plunge into* or *submerge* is better.

I say this because for adult *baptism* in church we normally think in terms of bringing up the person out of the water after having plunged him into the water which had *made* him *fully wet*. This remark may seem humorous, but understand that the Greek word does not include bringing up *the fully wet* item, arm, or person.

I trust that you are staying with me. Only a few days ago I was going through this for myself and you are joining me, at least for now. So stay with me.

The Greek word for '**for**' actually means *over*: it has to do with *place*, in the sense that being in a *place over* something has to do with *the thing of higher quality being over something of lower quality*. (I.e. if Christ was in a *place over* something then surely he was greater than the thing he was over.)

The Greek word for '**the**' means *the*, as in *pointing out the next word*.

The Greek word for '**dead**' means *corpse*. Paul was speaking about a resurrection of '**the dead**' and he used terminology of the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 37 is the famous prophesy of dry bones that first were gathered into corpses and then the corpses were given breath to become living beings. Moreover, in Revelation 20:12 is '**I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God**'.

Therefore, to sum up, we are going to re-translate some of the verse: instead of '**Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead**' let us translate it '**Else what (i.e. what did Christ) to make baptism over the dead**'.

Here we see the concept of Christ having died and '**baptized**' (i.e. *he descended fully into the earth*). Is not Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection symbolized in the baptism of a new Christian? Ah, but in this verse Paul did not yet speak of *coming up* (i.e. resurrection); instead he spoke of Christ as *fully descended into the earth*, and *over* (thus greater than) *the dead*. These dead shall be resurrected to stand before Almighty God.

As stated above, Paul used Peter's teaching in his defense of the resurrection doctrine.

To say it differently: "Why did Christ go into the depths of the earth in *a place above the dead* where he stayed three days *preaching to the dead* '**if the dead rise not at all?**'"

Now let us finish the verse **'why are they then baptized for the dead?'** The Greek words are the same: **'why'** is *who, what, which*, and **'are they'** are not in the original text, and **'then'** means *also*, and **'baptized for the dead'** is the same as above. By repetition, Paul was emphasizing the first part of the verse; and so we have **'what (i.e. what did Christ) also descending into the depths of the earth over the dead?'**

Putting it together in our re-translation we have:

'Else what did Christ in making baptism [i.e. him descending into the depths of the earth] over the dead...if the dead rise not at all? What [therefore] did Christ, also descending [i.e. as all dead ones had done] into the depths of the earth over the dead?'

This was Paul's continuation of argument against those who claimed there was no resurrection. See above 1Peter 3:21 part 3) of my comments. In the latter part of this chapter we shall see Paul's continued argument as he begins to speak of the kind of body the Christian shall have when he or she is resurrected.



15:30-32) And why stand we [the apostles] in jeopardy every hour? I protest by [the means of] your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, [that] I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

15:33) Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

I.e. "Do not go astray, for worthless companionship spoils good and useful habits."

15:34) Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame [i.e. said to Christians].



Beginning here is the second primary topic, the first primary topic being verse 29.

15:35) But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come [up]?

It seems that Paul had given this argument before.

15:36) Thou fool [i.e. mindless one], that which thou sowest is not quickened [i.e. vitalized, made alive], except it die:

Paul continues to speak as in 15:1-33 about something going into the ground, as did Jesus, and as is described in verse 15:29 and in 1Peter 3:18-22 and 4:5,6. And remember that Christ Jesus was (is) the **'seed'** of Abraham as promised in the Abrahamic Covenant.

In death, Jesus descended into the earth for three days (i.e. like three days and nights of Jonah in the sea) and there Jesus preached to the souls (i.e. the dead) that had died before and during the Noah Flood. (Please allow my repetition.)

15:37) And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that [kind of] body that [it] shall be, but [instead] bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

I.e. "And that which is sown is not the kind of body which when quickened it shall be, but you sow the bare grain; for instance wheat or some other grain."

15:38) But God giveth it [i.e. the quickened plant] a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own kind of body.

15:39) [Moreover] All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

15:40) There are also celestial bodies [of the heavens], and bodies terrestrial [of the earth]: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

15:41) There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for [even] one star differeth from another star in glory.

In these last two verses is the word '**glory**', yet Paul has implied that every kind of body created of God has its own '**glory**'. Also implied is: by the Creator every kind of body stays within its own track of ongoing production.

15:42) [Be it known, then, that] So also is the resurrection of the dead. [In that] It [i.e. the body or corpse] is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

For a seed to be quickened into the new life of a plant the seed's body must decay in the soil, which decay is the initial part of the quickening process. It is interesting that God designed the seed-to-plant process so that He could use it to explain to men the quickening process of salvation in Christ Jesus.

Moreover, it is the process that all men shall go through when all shall be resurrected.

However, as stated above, Jesus did not experience the corruption or decay part of the process. Indeed, at the right hand of God the Father Jesus is the Firstborn of many.

15:43) It is sown in dishonour [i.e. undignified in corruption]; it is raised in [quickened] glory: it is sown in weakness [i.e. frailty]; it is raised in power [i.e. force]:

Indeed, if you have observed a seed spring into the new life of a plant then you have seen '**force**' in action as the soil became pushed aside and upward during the plant's emergence. True '**power**' is not in the lifeless seed (as many imagine in the process), rather such '**power**' is in its Creator. The Greek word in the verse is '**force**', not '**power**'. In God is the '**power**', and according to His design He '**forcefully**' handles each thing according to His design of each thing.

15:44) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

15:45) And so it is written, The first man Adam was made [i.e. caused to be] a [i.e. into a] living soul; the last [i.e. final] Adam was made a quickening [i.e. vitalized, quickened] spirit.

Typically this verse is thought to be a *comparison* of the man Adam with the man Jesus. Yet, in this whole passage Paul was not speaking of living, walking, and talking beings on the earth. He was teaching about God's quickening process, a process which culminates in resurrection (resurrection of Jesus and resurrection '**of the dead**').

Paul reminded his readers that Adam came into being by God taking the natural dust of the ground and He *quickened* the dust into a living natural male person whom He named Adam. He took a natural rib from Adam and He *quickened* it into a living natural female person whom Adam named Eve. Adam and Eve were a result of God's *quickening* process. They had *natural* bodies, not spiritual bodies.

In a similar manner, then, Jesus became the '**final Adam**'. (The base word for 'man' is 'adam'.) God's Quickening Process for the Ages resulted in the *new quickened spiritual body* of Jesus so that the end result for men shall also be a *new quickened spiritual body*.

15:46) Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

I.e. "However, it was not Jesus' spiritual body that came first, but rather his natural body; afterward his spiritual body."

15:47,48) The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy: the second man [Christ Jesus] is the Lord [who came down] from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

Here is why in the process of dying and rising that Jesus did not (and did not need to) decay or corrupt, whereas earthy men do need to corrupt within the process.

15:49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, [in resurrection] we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

15:50) Now this I say, brethren, that [natural] flesh and blood cannot inherit the [supernatural or spiritual] kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Therefore, the living Christian is not (yet) in the kingdom of God since we continue to walk in corruption. Therefore, the Christian Church is not the the kingdom of God. Indeed, we are not even a corrupt kingdom.

However, we do have an '**inheritance**'.

15:51,52) Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [as 'the dead'], but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the living] shall [also] be changed.

At the trumpet, the living shall be changed from corruptible man to incorruptible man without going through the dying decaying process...thus the '**mystery**'. Paul had explained the process at length for the dead, yet here he declared the mystery of the living.

15:53) For this corruptible [body] must put on incorruption, and this mortal [life] must put on immortality.

In the early days and years, Paul and the other apostles thought they very well might see Jesus coming through the clouds and then they would experience their bodies going through the mysterious change of mortal bodies turning into immortal bodies.

15:54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Verse 26: '**The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.**'

15:55-58) O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.



It is advantageous, bearing in mind all you have just read, to return to the beginning and read again verses 1-28. It is clear, when enough time is spent on a passage with the Lord's help, to see the whole of it fitting together.

In fact, I had been in the process of studying the latter part of this chapter, and had begun going through the preceding verses to see at what verse I should begin for the study when I came upon verse 29. I had seen it often and over the years had been asked about it on several occasions, but I had always responded, "I do not know what it means, because there are no other scriptures in the Bible that seem to go with this verse." In other words, I was not interested in spending time on it because I figured that perhaps it was mistranslated, and in any case the whole passage stood quite well on its own with no misunderstanding of its meaning.

Yet, this time the verse caught my attention and I decided to wait several minutes on the Lord to see if He wanted me to spend more time on it. "Lord, I wish to get back to the lower passage, but let me take a peek at this verse." So I opened e-Sword to look at the verse and see the meaning of its Greek words. As I have detailed above, all the words at the beginning of the verse could be translated somewhat differently, but '**baptize**' and '**the**' and '**dead or corpse**' had no other meaning and so they were *fixed* in the verse. Still, a possible different meaning of the verse was escaping me.

So I did what I always do. I went to the beginning of the chapter and began slowly praying and reading. By the time I had arrived at verse 29 I had absorbed what the passage was clearly about. Then when I reread 29, '**baptize**' jumped out at me and I saw it: instead of repeat-

ing all he had said about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, Paul simply had substituted the symbolized word '**baptize**' or '**baptism**' into his argument. Everyone in the early Church would have known what he was saying.

Verse 29 is very important in Paul's argument for the reality of The Resurrection, for in this verse Paul described how Jesus descended into the earth to a place '**over the corpses**'. The doctrine as Peter had been preaching it had already been widely taught to the churches in the nations and so in verse 29 Paul used that doctrine in his own argument. Indeed, why would anyone or any great being, much less the Son of God, die and go to the trouble to descend into the depths of the earth to preach to those souls who had died (i.e. before and during the Noah Flood)? Why did not Jesus simply go to heaven and take his victorious seat beside the Father?

Such was Paul's argument: If those corpses would not be resurrected, then Why? Indeed, if resurrection of Christians was false doctrine then the Apostle Peter's teaching of Jesus' death-journey and three day stay in the bowels of the earth also was false doctrine.

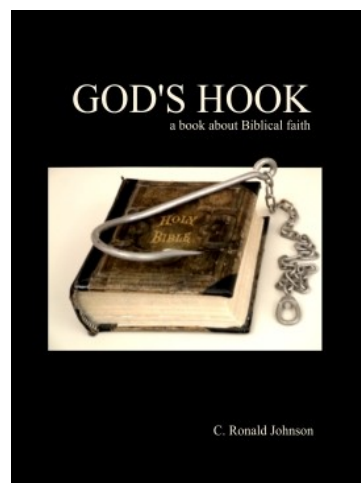
Indeed, then what else was false among all the teachings of the Church?



I have described to you, dear reader, my process in the above little study. You can do the same. Indeed, all of my writings on this website, including my books, have at their core my hopeful encouragement to the reader that he or she is capable in the Lord to do likewise. I do not mean "to produce books and studies", but "to habitually experience exciting and stimulating times with the Lord in His Word".

The Word is God's beautiful garden where He would most often meet with His child. He does not meet me there as often as I would like, yet the Word has Its own way of inwardly working. On the other hand, if I am not in the garden when He would visit with me then I miss Him. Some day when I stand before Him in my judgment, I will find out how many times I missed Him...and I will have to answer Why?

- These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press -



a book
about
Biblical
Faith

the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus

