

LESSON 25 ON 2<sup>ND</sup> CORINTHIANS  
QUESTIONS FROM THE CLASS

1. Our year-long study of the Corinthian letters taught us many lessons and gave us another close look at the many aspects of the Apostles Paul. We know a great deal about the Christians in Corinth of that day. If we were in Corinth this morning (the Lord's Day), would we find a group to worship with? Did the church survive the centuries since Paul labored there?

The sources that I was able to review listed only three congregations of the Lord's church in Greece. Two of the three are in Athens. The third is in Glyfada, which is about 50 miles east of Athens. The largest of the congregations has about 70 members. The two in Athens have full time preachers. However, the list may not be complete. Neither of the full-time preachers was named Dino Russos, which is the name of a long-time preacher in Athens. Perhaps he has retired, but his not being included may indicate that there are other congregations in Greece that have not been included.

2. What did Paul mean by his determination "not to boast in another man's line of things"? 2 Corinthians 10:16.

The Greek word translated "line" (kanw,n) means "(1) literally *measuring rod or rule*; figuratively, as a measure of assessment of a prescribed norm of action or duty *standard, rule, principle* (2) as a sphere of activity or influence *area, limits*." Thus, Paul is saying the same thing that he said in Romans 15:20-21 (<sup>20</sup> Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: <sup>21</sup> But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.) and 1 Cor. 3:10 (<sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.).

Of course Paul always remembered that he simply "laid" the foundation; he did not design it or determine its bounds. He emphasized the limited nature both his work and that of others in 1 Cor. 3:11 – "<sup>11</sup> For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He described the relationship between the apostles, prophets and Jesus similarly in Eph. 2:19-21: "<sup>19</sup> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; <sup>20</sup> And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; <sup>21</sup> In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: <sup>22</sup> In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The importance of building on the right foundation as individuals is clearly stated in Matthew 7:21-27: "<sup>21</sup> Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. <sup>24</sup> Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: <sup>25</sup> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. <sup>26</sup> And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: <sup>27</sup> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

The blessedness of building on God’s foundation is stated in 2 Tim. 2:15-19: <sup>15</sup> Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. <sup>16</sup> But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. <sup>17</sup> And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; <sup>18</sup> Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. <sup>19</sup> Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

3. In 1 Cor. 15:29 Paul talks about those being baptized for the dead. The Mormons use this scripture to justify their practice of baptizing for the dead. Please discuss the meaning of this scripture, i.e., to what Paul might have been referring based on the context.

A. What is Paul teaching in this passage?

As one commentator noted, “the ingenuity of the exegetes has run riot” in trying to explain this verse. While the argument is clear, the specifics are not. The argument is that, whatever this practice involved, it would make no sense if there were no resurrection of the dead. But Paul does not tell us what the practice itself involved. There are three popular viewpoints, two of which can be considered as possible explanations.

1. The viewpoint that must be rejected is the one that is the most popular among commentators – that Paul is referring to some kind of vicarious baptism for dead persons.

The Mormons today have such a practice, and they point to this verse for support (more about that later). But even if that is what Paul had in mind, he does not endorse the practice, but rather he simply refers to it. In other words, the practice is merely mentioned, it is not taught. If the Mormons baptized for the dead and rejected the resurrection, Paul could ask them this very same question – not to endorse the practice – but rather to point out their inconsistencies.

The use of the third person here is interesting. “What will they do? What are they being baptized? Paul used the second person in verse 12: “How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Is the group in v. 29 the same group he addressed in verse 12? Or was the practice in v. 29 carried out by an even

smaller group who might not even be expected to read this letter? And if so, why would this argument carry any weight with the others?

Those are all good questions, but in the end we must reject this view because it is inconceivable that Paul could pass over this point so quickly if Christians in Corinth were actually being baptized vicariously for dead people. Such a practice would strike at the very heart of the gospel and is contrary to all that the Bible says about our personal responsibility to hear and obey the gospel. Moreover, Paul grieved and sorrowed for his Jewish brothers in the flesh because they did not obey the gospel (Romans 9:2). Never did he say that he would be baptized for those among this who had departed this life. To the contrary, he said that he would be “accursed from Christ for his brethren.”

2. The second viewpoint is probably the most popular one in the church – that Paul is referring to those who are being baptized with the view toward being reunited with their departed loved ones in heaven.

Under this view the Greek preposition “*u`pe,r*” does not mean “in place of” or “for the benefit of” but instead means “with a view toward” or “for the sake of.”

Some commentators argue that this view places too great a burden on that preposition, but the view has the advantages of making perfect sense with Paul’s argument and coinciding with our personal experiences with people who have been converted following the death of a loved one. Why would that do that if the loved one will never be raised?

3. The third viewpoint is that the term “dead” in this verse is a metaphor for the condition of believers prior to their baptism. They are, in effect, dead bodies being buried in the waters of baptism, which is how Paul describes the situation in Romans 6.

Under this view, a paraphrase of v. 29 might be “Otherwise what do those hope to achieve who are baptized for their dying bodies?” This view has several advantages:

- A) It was the unanimous view of the so-called early church fathers.
- B) It explains the use of the third person because Paul is referring grammatically to those who are being baptized.
- C) It fits in well with Paul’s other writings on the subject. See, for example, Rom. 6:3-14, Ephesians 2:1, 5, and Colossians 2:13. Note also Romans 8:10 (“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”)
- D) It fits the context. We share in Christ’s death at our baptism so that we can first be raised a new creature from the waters of baptism and later be raised from the dead on the last day.

Baptism assumes death and resurrection. If there is not resurrection from the dead, then baptism becomes a pointless rite that falsely represents something that will not happen.

One last suggestion is worthy of consideration. Two basic rules of interpretation must be kept in mind. 1). A verse must be understood in its context. 2). A difficult passage must not be understood in a manner that contradicts clear teaching in passages

that are easily understood. It is sufficient to reject literal baptism for the salvation of the deceased to read 2 Corinthians 5:10: “<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.” If one is to be judged based upon the things done in the body, eternal destination is fixed at death when the spirit departs from the body. James 2:26.

What is Paul dealing with in this context? The entire chapter is a discourse on the resurrection. This being the case, Paul is not teaching anything relative to baptism in v. 29. He is teaching the Corinthians something about the resurrection. After all, it was the doctrine of the resurrection with which they were struggling. They believed in and understood baptism. Paul was using what they knew and understood about baptism to teach them something about the resurrection. What was it that the Corinthians did not understand about the resurrection? They did not believe in a bodily resurrection. Such a resurrection was contrary to their Pagan background and it was difficult for them to grasp. They understood that baptism was a burial and a resurrection. What was it that was resurrected? They understood it to be a bodily resurrection that was a new creation. 2 Cor. 5:17. The concept that the physical body was not raised a new creation at Christ’s return (1 Cor. 15:35-57) negates their baptism. They have no salvation; they are yet in their sins; their faith is vain.

B. Does 1 Corinthians 15:29 justify the Mormon practice of baptizing for the dead?

1. There are two passages that the Mormons sometimes use to justify their practice – 1 Cor. 15:29 and 1 Peter 3:19-26 and 4:6.

**1 Peter 3:18-22** <sup>18</sup> 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: <sup>19</sup> By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; <sup>20</sup> Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. <sup>21</sup> The like figure 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: <sup>22</sup> Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

**1 Peter 4:3-6** <sup>3</sup> For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: <sup>4</sup> Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*: <sup>5</sup> Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. <sup>6</sup> For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

The Book of Mormon, which according to *Doctrine and Covenants* is “the fullness of the everlasting gospel (27:5), contains no mention of the practice, even though baptism for the dead is a central teaching of the Mormon Church. Its *Topical Guide to*

*the Scriptures* gives four references to the practice, all from *Doctrine and Covenants* (124, 127, 128, 138). Thus, there is no evidence that the people described in the Book of Mormon even knew of baptism for the dead, much less practiced it. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion, it should be noticed that the Book of Mormon even contradicts the practice.

The silence of the Book of Mormon on the subject means that it rests entirely on one verse from the Bible – 1 Cor. 15:29. This is acknowledged in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (a 1992 work published under the supervision of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS church) – “He [Paul] refers to a practice of vicarious baptism, a practice for which we have no other evidence in the Pauline or other New Testament or early Christian writings.” Some even admit that they have no Biblical source for the doctrine, but rely on the fact that it was revealed to Joseph Smith. According to Robert J. Matthews, a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, writing in the LDS church’s publication, *Ensign* (“I Have a Question,” September 1981, p. 16), Joseph Smith “obtained the doctrine of salvation for the dead by revelation and not from the printed pages of the bible.” Matthews explains that this is true of Mormon doctrine in general: “the Bible was not the source of the doctrines the Prophet Joseph Smith taught. Rather, the Bible, so far as it is translated correctly, is tangible evidence that the doctrines he received by revelation were the same as those the ancient prophets obtained by revelation.”

**NOTE:** The Mormon Church accepts four books as the basis of and guide for doctrine: 1) The KJV insofar as it is correctly translated. (Joseph Smith was preparing a “correct” translation at the time of his death; it was published after his death.) 2) The Book of Mormon. 3) Doctrine and Covenants. 4) The Pearl of Great Price. Suffice to say here that the Book of Mormon bears no indicia of inspiration; indeed, its contents demonstrate that it is the work of uninspired man. It is contradicted by history, archeology, genetics, and DNA for starters. It is clear that there is no relationship between New World Indians and Jews, while the Book of Mormon claims that they are descendants from Jews.

In order to understand why Mormons baptize for the dead, it is necessary to know something about Mormon doctrine. To know Mormon doctrine is to know that Mormonism is not Christian, and is in fact anti-Christian. Most of its anti-Christian doctrine is concealed from those whom they would convert until they are safely in the fold and well indoctrinated.

First, Mormonism does not believe in the God of the Bible or the Christ of the Bible. Mormonism is at best Monarchotheistic and at worst Polytheistic. God is a man who consists of flesh and bones. Jehovah is Adam who came to earth with Eve who was one of his wives. When they came to earth they were immortal. In order to become mortal it was necessary for them to sin. Once mortal they could beget sons and daughters. All souls are pre-existent and apparently have been for all time. Matter is also eternal. In order for the pre-existent souls to become God they must first become man and as man become worthy. When a child is begotten and born a pre-existent soul enters the body. Thus they say that Christ, being pre-existent, is eternal, but they also say that

every man can become God in the same manner that Christ became God. In their pre-existent state Adam had other children. One of Christ's pre-existent brothers was Lucifer. Christ was nothing and became nothing that every man has not been and cannot become. Christ was conceived by the virgin Mary, but Adam (Jehovah) was the father. The conception was the result of a physical union between Adam and Mary. Jesus was also a polygamist, being the husband of Mary and Martha of Bethany and of Mary Magdalene. He fathered children so that he could see them before the cross.

Recent questions have been raised concerning whether a Mormon can be elected in this country. Mormons have undertaken to defend their religion and to represent that they are "traditional" Christians. One such person in such a defense stated that "we believe in Jesus Christ." A little investigation reveals that they do not believe in the Christ of the New Testament. Mitt Romney, a presidential candidate<sup>1</sup>, stated that he believed in Christ as his Savior. In a sense that is true. Mormons teach that the death of Jesus atoned for the sins of Adam, but not for the sins of anyone else. No one other than Adam is cleansed by the blood of Christ. Man's sins are forgiven by his own death, i.e., the shedding of his own blood. Brigham Young stated that if he came upon one of his wives (he had 25) in the act of adultery that he would unhesitatingly thrust a javelin through both of them and that in so doing he would be guiltless. In fact, he said, he would be assisting in their salvation by shedding their blood. This may account for some of the Mormon massacres in the early years of their existence.

The pathway for man to become a God is to be a Mormon, and to be a very good Mormon. That is not required for salvation, however, because Mormons believe in universal salvation. Those who are evil must go to hell, but they will ultimately come out and go into the first heaven, the Tellestial region. This lowest heaven is for the heathen people who rejected the Gospel and those who are at the second coming of Christ suffering in hell pending the last resurrection. The second heaven, the Terrestrial region, will be inhabited by Christians who did not accept the Mormon message, Mormons who did not live up their church's requirements, and men of good will of other religions who rejected the revelations of the saints. The final or Celestial heaven is itself divided into three levels, the highest of which is godhood or the possession of a kingdom for one's self and one's family. This particular estate has as its prerequisite the candidate's having been sealed by celestial marriage in a Mormon temple while upon the earth. Even in the celestial kingdom godhood is by slow progression, and in the end each who becomes a god will, with his family, rule and populate a separate planet of his own.

Given this doctrine, two doctrines become very important – celestial marriage and baptism for the dead. Both of these rites must be performed in a Mormon temple, into which "Gentiles" (all non-Mormons) cannot enter. While polygamy has been outlawed criminally and is not practiced to a great extent (though it is often not prosecuted in Utah), it is still available eternally. If a man sees another woman with whom he desires to spend eternity, and assuming that she is willing, they simply enter into a celestial marriage (good for heaven only). A man can have as many celestial wives as he can

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<sup>1</sup> Mormons have been quoted as saying that Romney's candidacy will be good for Mormonism because of the exposure it will give them. That can only be the case if that exposure does not reveal Mormonism's anti-Christian doctrines. According to some polls some 55% of American say that the country is not ready for a Mormon president. The highest ranking Mormon presently in the government is Senator Harry Reid of Utah, the Senate Majority Leader.

persuade to enter into such a relationship. The purpose is to populate his planet when he becomes a god. As one Mormon expressed it, eternal begetting makes more sense “than playing harps all of the time.”

No one who has not been baptized in a Mormon temple can ever attain to the Celestial heaven. But worry not. If there is among your family (and it is urged to limit proxy baptism to one’s family though being baptized for others is not strictly forbidden) those who have not been baptized, then a Mormon can be baptized for that person who can then enter into the celestial family. This practice has given rise to the Mormon’s interest in genealogies. They maintain the greatest amount of genealogical information available.