

Stepping Into The Kingdom

Today, after church, we will gather at the Springvale Recreation Center to celebrate the ordinance of water baptism. This is not an insignificant step in a walk of faith in Jesus Christ it is a giant step, a step of obedience.

When a believer yields to the waters of baptism they are walking in obedience to the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19, **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**

This was Jesus' words in the very beginning of the Great Commission that would indicate that the first thing a new disciple should do is to be baptized, "...**in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**

This baptism is done under the authority of God the Father, God the Son [Jesus Christ] and God the Holy Spirit. That authority had been established in the preface to the commissioning when Jesus said, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on Earth.**" (Matthew 28:18)

A commission has no power unless backed up by authority. No one has more authority than **all**.

The question may come up, "What if I was baptized as a baby?" An infant baptism is arranged and chosen by the parents. They are doing it in obedience to the cultural expectation of the church. While that is good, it is the parents that are seeking to walk in obedience in that case. It is confirmed when the child chooses to respond in personal obedience to Jesus by being baptized by their own choice; by the parents, good, by the individual better.

In the Foursquare Church we don't baptize babies; we dedicate them at the hands of their parents who agree to; "...bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4)

We, as the body of Christ commit to stand with the parents in this task. So, really it's more of a ceremonial dedication of us all to support a godly parent(s) to raise a godly child in our community of faith as a circle of support, encouragement and love. Kingdom kinship!

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The Bible gives many examples of water baptism immediately following receiving the Lord. This is really the first step of discipleship; even as Jesus laid it out in the Great Commission. When He says, “**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...**” he’s saying right there that the first thing you do is baptize them.

Not all believers choose it right away because we don’t push it so there is no confusion about whether or not a person is saved or not. A person can be saved and not baptized. Our salvation is done by our acceptance of Jesus as our savior: Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸ **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,** ⁹ **not of works, lest anyone should boast.** Acts 16:31, **So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”** John 1:12, **But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**

The idea that you need to be baptized to be saved would mean you have to combine your faith in Jesus with your own work of being baptized. That is clearly contradicted by Paul when he writes to the Ephesians that our salvation is “...**the gift of God,** ⁹ **not of works, lest anyone should boast.**” that we receive by faith when we place our faith in Jesus Christ; as many will put it, “By faith alone through Christ alone.”

So why get baptized? Well, first of course because Jesus commands it in the Great Commission but, as if that wasn’t enough, He tells us in detail when John records His late night conversation with Nicodemus.

After receiving a rabbinical endorsement by this man who is referred to as “a ruler of the Jews” now calling Jesus “Rabbi” He says emphatically, that a spiritual birth from above “born again” must take place before a person can even see, recognize and perceive the kingdom of God. But you can’t stop there! How many people do you know say they have walked the isle or raised their hand or come forward at an evangelistic even and nothing changed in their lives?

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John 3:5, Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

This indicates that the step we take to enter into the kingdom God is one that is preceded by water [or natural child birth] and the Holy Spirit the supernatural birth of your spirit by the Holy Spirit. This new birth is followed by new life and the first step in this new life is to be the step of obedience, the step into the waters of baptism. This first step of obedience is often accompanied by the filling of the Holy Spirit that may also demonstrate its self by the flowing of a Spiritual language that is referred to as “Speaking in tongues.” This is also part of the Great Commission as seen in Mark 16:17, **And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;**

These signs “will follow” those who believe. These are just a few of the miraculous gifts that we can expect when we walk in obedience to the directives of Jesus Christ that are in His Great Commission, and they begin with water baptism.

The first thing the apostle Peter called for when he preached from the upper room on Pentecost in **Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:13

¹³ Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

Even the Ethiopian eunuch that Phillip witnessed to in Acts 8:38 understood that he should be baptized after accepting Jesus as soon as he saw water. The first thing Saul did when the scales fell from his eyes was to be baptized.

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Over and over throughout the New Testament the word of God shows us that water baptism is the first step of obedience in the new life of a believer in Jesus Christ. When someone first gets saved and the Holy Spirit has opened their eyes to the reality of Jesus Christ as their savior they should follow it as soon as possible with water baptism.

To baptize comes from the Greek word *baptizo* meaning “to dip” as when dyeing a garment. It required total submersion so the transformation or color change would be complete. I think many of us in the body of Christ enter baptism half heartedly not understanding the fact that we are to be completely changed. We come out of the waters of baptism more like a hippie’s tie died t-shirt with more interest in how we look than being totally transformed. The idea came from the Jewish ceremonial cleansing that was meant to purify the one cleansing. John the Baptist baptized for the cleansing or remission of sins saying “Repent and be baptized!” However he told the people that He who would come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire! Meaning Jesus! The Holy Spirit baptism came on the day of Pentecost and the fire will come in the last days when Jesus judges unbelieving Israel with His cleansing fire.

It is important that we enter into baptism seriously, soberly and with the reverence that Jesus had when He offered Himself as the ransom for mankind on the cross. We are to see the process of water baptism as being surrendered to God’s will as Jesus did when He went to the cross. He took all our sin to make us pure and we in like manner are cleansed from our sins by His name as we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The vessel of our body is made pure so that the Holy Spirit can fully occupy us.

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Then as we rise from the waters of baptism and we go back into the world and are once more soiled by the sin in it we must daily submit ourselves to the fresh infilling of His Holy Spirit.

Water baptism is a singular event outwardly demonstrating an internal phenomenon of transformation and deeper commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives. This event doesn't need to be repeated, though it can be for various reasons, such as rededication or renewed commitment to the things of God.

This door opening gesture on our part is an open declaration of faith in Jesus Christ and His power to transform our lives from our won to His owned. After this point is passed you can more freely express, [Galatians 2:20](#) I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

He loved us so much that He gave us His all. We must give our all that He might be all to us. We give up our old life so that He will give us the new life He has for us and that our joy may be full.