

If we are baptized by the Holy Spirit, why do we need water?

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Topic(s): Baptism, Salvation

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There are too many passages pertaining to water baptism following the ascension of Christ and the establishment of the church for us to disregard the usage of water in baptism. For example, what baptism did the Ethiopian receive in Acts 8? Here are verses 35-38:

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” 37 Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”

It is unmistakable that the Ethiopian received water baptism in this text. Note that Philip, not the Holy Spirit, baptized the Ethiopian. Earlier in Acts 8, the Samaritans were baptized, but had not yet received the Holy Spirit (cf. 8:12-17).

Jesus' command to the disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16 was for them to teach and baptize those who believed the gospel message.

Paul said he had baptized some people in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). In his epistle to the Ephesians, he said there was only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). The only logical and biblical conclusion one may reach from Paul's teaching and practice is that water baptism is the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5.

In 1 Peter 3:21, Peter said baptism saves, being careful to note it was not the water that cleanses. Why would he make this clarification if water was not involved?