

## JOHN 3:5 THE ALLEGED ULTIMATE PROOF TEXT FOR WATER BAPTISM HAVING POWER TO SAVE SOULS DOES NOT SUPPORT THE DOCTRINE

John 3:5. When having a chat with Nicodemus, Jesus claimed that only a person born of water and the Holy Spirit could go to Heaven, "Unless a man is born from above (or born again) of water and the Spirit, he cannot ever enter the Kingdom of God".

The original Greek word, anothēn means "born again" or "born from above". John's gospel is fond of words with more than one meaning. He even uses pneuma which means both "wind" and "Spirit". It is odd that Roman Catholicism loves John 3:5 when its author delighted in being unclear! Born from above would prove that the water is not literal. When the gospel makes it double-meaning, when it also means born again, it is a clear hint that the gospel does not mean water baptism saves. It denies it.

Jesus states it is a necessity not a command. Nobody seriously thinks that God had to save us by baptism.

People like to say there is no difference in born again or born from above. But there is a huge difference! Born again of water and the spirit means the born from above is about the water and the spirit. How does Heaven give you water? The answer is it gives you rain and wind. Water and spirit are water and wind so one good interpretation is that he means being born from Heaven. The above and the water and the wind refer to the sky as an emblem of Heaven.

"Born again of water and even the Spirit" is a false translation. No Bible translation has the word even here. The even does not belong in the text at all. The Greek word "kai" means and and not even.

So did Jesus say you need water and the spirit to be born into the kingdom of God? It is best to link this to similar texts. The New Testament says that the saviour will baptise people with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The fire is taken as a sign of purification. Baptism with the Holy Spirit involves a painful purging of evil that makes you holy and born again. You have left sin behind if not totally then almost totally and are like you are remade. The water is best understood as a symbol of purification just like the fire is. So unless you are born again of purification and the Holy Spirit you cannot enter the kingdom of God. To be purified you must consent to it. So even if John 3:5 did mean baptism it cannot condone infant baptism. But there is no need to imagine it is saying you need real water to be saved.

Shortly after what Jesus said to Nicodemus about the need to be born of water he told a Samaritan woman at a well that he could give her water to drink that will take away thirst and that will become a spring inside that will well up to eternal life. He uses water as a symbol of the activity of the Holy Spirit. The woman thinks he means real water and he does not correct her. He implies that she has no excuse for thinking that he means real water. It is like how people may not answer those who utter huge stupidity. Obviously, Jesus expected people to know that he did not mean real water by water in a spiritual context. Born of water means born of the purifying power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was promising the power of the Spirit to the woman. Is the Samaritan story where John explains the meaning of water when Jesus told Nicodemus that we must be born of water?

The water may be the water in the womb. Jesus may be saying that unless we are born of this water and the Spirit we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The Christians object that that would be an odd thing to say. He was being poetic. He wanted to emphasise the importance of being begotten of the Spirit by saying it was as important as being born of a woman. John 3 is very poetic and much symbolism is incorporated into it.

"This is the one who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth." 1 John 5:6.

This verse is usually taken as referring to Jesus' baptism by John and the blood of the cross. John calls on the Spirit of God to witness this - he is swearing to its truth as if people were doubting it in his day. He goes as far as to say that it is not really his testimony but the Spirit's. That is a tactic used by those who do not expect you to take their word for it so they have to bring God into it to purloin some believability. It is intended to scare people who doubt by inferring that it is God who they are doubting and as God is the big guy that should be dangerous. Some link the text to the water and blood that supposedly gushed out of Jesus when he was stabbed on the cross. But that presumes this episode was given huge importance so that readers would have known right away what John meant. It was not that important. What was important to early Christians was the baptism and bloody death of Jesus. It was these that needed testimony. The stories about Jesus were based not on historical fact or evidence but on what some people said. Today, it is just like how the alleged presence of the Virgin at Medjugorje depends not on evidence or history but on the witness of the visionaries. Another possible

meaning is that the water is the water of birth. It is more natural to say that Jesus came by the water of birth than by the water of baptism. Baptism was not about his coming but his starting of his ministry.

Born of water can be a poetic way of saying born into this life. The baby at baptism is not born of water. What happens is that God decides to accept a child that the water is sprinkled on. The water does not cause the new birth of baptism but is the sign of it. Born of water cannot refer to baptism.

The Christian book, *When Critics Ask* (page 406), tells us that since Jesus when he said man must be born of water and the Spirit to be saved he was answering Nicodemus who asked if born again meant having to go back to your mother's womb that Jesus by water was referring to the water of the womb. This is the right explanation and understanding for the context determines the meaning. So Jesus meant that unless you are born of the water inside your mother and then by the Holy Spirit you cannot be saved. Some might say that is strange because you don't tell people they have to exist to be saved. You would if you wanted to poetically show that spiritual rebirth is as necessary for salvation as physical birth. There is a lot of poetry in the passage. Jesus would have said, "Unless you are born of baptism and the spirit," if he had been thinking of baptism.

Let think more on this, "Unless a man is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." If the water was required it does not follow that the water gives the Holy Spirit. We read in the Book of Acts that the early Church denied that baptism gave the Holy Spirit (Acts chapters 8 and 19). The Holy Spirit was received subsequent to baptism by the imposition of hands. The Roman Catholic doctrine that baptism gives the Holy Spirit and that one is reborn of the Spirit in baptism is totally unscriptural and also anti-scriptural. Even if John 3 requires baptism for salvation it does not say that baptism forgives sin or that it gives the Holy Spirit. The water might be like your ticket to receiving the Spirit. The dishonesty of the Roman Catholic Church in quoting that verse to get people to believe in its doctrine is deplorable. The Church gets away with it by making people so prejudiced that they imagine they see in verses what the Church wants them to see. It is obvious that the birth from the spirit is more important than the birth from water. Also, "Take John and get in the car and you will get to London," does not necessarily mean that taking John is necessary. You could get to London without him. John then would correspond to the water in the verse while the car would correspond to the spirit.

So we have to be born of water and the spirit. The water may be a symbol like the water mentioned in Isaiah 12:3; 55:1 and Jeremiah 2:13. Jesus told Nicodemus that he should understand these things being a teacher of the Old Testament which makes it likely that he was annoyed at him for not understanding what the water symbol stood for. This instruction is the key to understanding. The Old Testament never mentions salvation by literal water but only by symbolic water. It appears that had Jesus meant baptism, he would have said that a man is born again by baptism and the Holy Spirit for Nicodemus was a good Jewish scholar and Judaism did not practice baptism as an official cleansing of sin so Nicodemus had no reason to assume that water had to mean baptism and though Jesus took John's baptism he never even baptised himself which he would have done had Nicodemus understood him to mean baptism. The apostles performed baptism later so Nicodemus had no reason to think that Jesus meant baptism or was into water baptism. And the gospel of John says that John said he only baptised Jesus as a sign that he was the one they were waiting for, the Lamb of God. Jesus later said that he washed people with the word of God (John 15:3).

Paul wrote in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12:13) that we all drank from the same Holy Spirit indicating that water was an emblem of the Holy Spirit and was not literal water. The primitive Christians understood the Holy Spirit to be a cleanser from sin and predictably they took water as a symbol of the Spirit. Jesus could have meant unless one is born of the cleansing and the Spirit, etc.

Water represented some kind of mystical experience and not water in the writings of John according to his First Epistle.

Rome does not really believe her interpretation of John 3:5 for Rome says that the people can be saved without water baptism. This salvation is done through the baptism of desire and the baptism of blood. Yet it cannot give a New Testament verse that says that these work. The places where salvation and forgiveness are spoken of as given without baptism do not relate to these other "baptisms".

The fact that the Old Testament says people can be saved without baptism means nothing for things are different now that the saviour has come (Hebrews 9, 10). Even if the verse did say that the birth of water was required for salvation it would not make it a sacrament or a magic rite. God could make an ordinary rite necessary for salvation.

The Catholic dogma of baptism is based on this text for nothing else in the Bible can really justify the dogma. This makes it virtually certain that some understanding that is opposed to the Catholic one is correct.

The Catholic doctrine contradicts Jesus' teaching that God is love for it claims that God holds babies and adults from him like filthy rags until the priest casts a spell on them with the rite. A truly perfect God would not be able to endure the wait. He would not put the needs of the spirit in the hands of a man. He's the one that condemns procrastination. Jesus said that

little children were not to be kept from him as the kingdom of God belongs to such as them. The kindest interpretation of this is that they did not need baptism to save them. Some claim the episode proves the need for baptism of children which is an insane interpretation. Jesus said the children were his friends and belonged to the kingdom and that is that. And nobody says they were baptised!

Jesus said John the Baptist had come in the spirit of Elijah. This is thought by some to refer to reincarnation. But the Bible says Elijah never died so that is out. Spirit means breath so that takes the mystery out of the text. It means John came with the ethos and in the ethos of the ministry of Elijah. Elijah was a man and had a spirit. The fact that Jesus came so close to reincarnation language and rejected that meaning shows he is against the doctrine. Spirit can mean ethos which makes it more confusing. Jesus did not say born of water and the Holy Spirit. That is huge.

What we read in John 3:5 was said before Jesus died for our sins and rose again. If it was the law then that disciples of Jesus had to be baptised then we can take Jesus' meaning to be what the Way International would say it could be. It could be temporary and would pass away at the resurrection of Jesus.

One has to be born of water first to join Jesus' spiritual class ie baptised in water. In that class you get the gospel in its fullness. The gospels say that Jesus was keeping his most sacred teachings for closer disciples. The gospels indicate that there were indeed such classes. When you get the gospel and understand it, you can accept salvation and then be born of the Holy Spirit. Thus you see that the water is not saving anybody or forgiving anybody. It is what the baptised do afterwards that counts. But you can still say you are born of water and the spirit.

The Roman Church admits that sacramental baptism wasn't practiced then - the rite of baptism until after the resurrection had no power and was intended to be symbolic. Jesus said he expected Nicodemus to understand. How could he then? The Catholic interpretation is the worst interpretation of them all. The Mormon interpretation that the words refer to water baptism, born of water, and confirmation, born of the Spirit, is a better one!

Catholic priests have said, you must be baptised and confirmed to enter the kingdom of God. Baptism is of water and confirmation of the Holy Spirit. This parallels Jesus's words. They certainly did not mean to imply that confirmation is as necessary to salvation as baptism for they believe that baptism alone can be enough.

If we are born again of the Spirit when we are baptised then why did Jesus not say that we are born again of the Holy Spirit and of water and not water and the Holy Spirit? The order is wrong. The Holy Spirit should be mentioned first and foremost. This suggests that water is a symbol not real water. Even if baptism in water could save you, it would be because of the Holy Spirit. The order is a clear hint that the water is not real water and that Jesus is saying you have to be born of water and wind to be saved.

The doctrine of baptism being a sacrament cannot be traced in the Bible. The Bible claims to be the only religious authority for Christians so it is unchristian to teach that it is a sacrament. The Catholic Church leadership is well educated and has no excuse for teaching the same old errors that it taught in the past. The errors are deliberate.

The Church then has people thinking water baptism puts them right with God when it doesn't. This is a major error and shows that if Christianity is true, the Catholic Church at best unwittingly is opposing it and the truth that God wants to give us.

People who are baptised seem no better or worse than people who are not baptised. Yet they claim to be born again. There is no point in baptism if it is not going to make any difference. Bishop Spong says that born again means returning to dependency like a child - you are the child and God is the parent who knows it all so you cannot doubt him. He says that being born again is becoming newly a child once more. Baptism then is intrinsically evil if it is about becoming born again in the sense of taking on total dependency again.

But some say that born again is not talking about going back to a baby state but about being radically changed by the power of God. Again, if baptism is about being born again then it is intrinsically evil for it says you are ontologically different to and spiritually blessed unlike the unbaptised. That is twisted because there are unbaptised people who are ten times better than any baptised person.

Jesus told Nicodemus not to wonder or marvel that we need to be born again. So he was saying that it is obvious that human nature needs a radical fixing. His words exclude Catholic baptism which does nothing radical to anybody. The baptised are as bad or as good as the unbaptised.

The new birth of water and the Spirit does not involve real water. If it did, Jesus would have made that clear. In fact the New Testament elsewhere talks of water as a symbol and it promises a baptism in the Holy Spirit and in fire meaning purification. The fire is not fire but purification so the water is not water but purification. So there are grounds for denying

it is real water.

John 3 mentions faith so much that it is clear that whatever water and the spirit mean they are no good unless you are adult enough to believe and believe and believe. Faith is seen as drink and as the spirit - is that what the text is getting at? So not only does the text not authorise baptism in water but it says baby baptism is a disgrace for the new birth is for people who know what they are doing! If it allows baptism it still effectively dismisses the vast majority of baptisms which are performed on babies.

The term born again is very odd. It is not what comes to mind naturally to describe any Christian for there is never a sudden change from sinner to saint. You would think the original text was ruined and was not understood correctly by the John author. Was Jesus born again when he rose? Does that help with John 3? Does it help us understand? Jesus tells Nicodemus that unless a person is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus found it hard to interpret. He thought it meant going back to the womb. Its a resurrection "prophecy" that has got mangled. The New Testament in places does see Jesus as being begotten or born somehow when he rose.

We conclude that the text is at best not good enough to base baptism on. Its doctrine lacks any credibility. Baptism or not, it gives no authority for the cynical Christian christening of babies which amounts to a form of conscription.