Born of Water and Spirit

John 3:5 as a Bible-wide discovery: cleansing, new birth, living water, Spirit life, true Israel, and restored Eden

This study is not an attempt to create a new doctrine. It is an attempt to slow down at a verse we have all read many times, and then ask whether John expected careful readers to hear more than one Scripture rope at the same time. The claim is simple: **Jesus did not speak John 3:5 into a vacuum.** He spoke it to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and a master of Israel. That means the words should first be tested inside the Hebrew Scriptures, inside John's own Gospel, and then inside John's final vision in Revelation.

Core guardrail: this is not a denial of the plain gospel. A sinner must be born from above by God, through Christ, by the Spirit, received by faith. The discovery is not a different gospel. The discovery is how much Scripture is already packed inside Jesus' words.

1. We Have All Read John 3:5 - But John Already Prepared the Reader

We have all read that Jesus told Nicodemus, **'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'** Many have taught it at face value, and many have also read their own experience back into the verse. Some hear physical birth and spiritual birth. Some hear Christian baptism. Some hear cleansing. Some hear regeneration. The mistake is not that these readers are trying to understand the verse. The mistake is stopping too soon.

John does not begin his Gospel in chapter 3. He begins in Genesis language: **Word, life, light, darkness, creation, witness, belief, name, birth, and God.** Before Nicodemus ever appears, John has already told us what kind of birth matters.

John 1:1-5

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

John 1:12-13

> *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

That is the first WOW in the study. Before Jesus says **born again** or **born of water and Spirit**, John has already said the children of God are not born by **blood**, not by **the will of the flesh**, not by **the will of man**, but **of God**. This immediately pushes against ancestry-only confidence, human effort confidence, and religious status confidence. John is not merely asking, 'Have you had a religious experience?' He is asking, **what is the source of your life?**

Then Nicodemus enters. He is not a casual reader. He is not a beginner. He is not a Sunday visitor. John calls him a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, and Jesus calls him a master of Israel. So when Jesus speaks, the question is not only, 'What would an English reader hear?' The question is, **what should a teacher of Israel have heard?**

John 3:3-10

> *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

Nicodemus heard the word as **again** and went immediately to the womb. But the word also carries the idea of **from above**, and John's Gospel keeps developing that vertical source. Flesh produces flesh. Spirit produces spirit. Bloodline cannot manufacture the kingdom. Religious willpower cannot manufacture the kingdom. The birth must be **of God**, **from above**, **by water and Spirit**.

2. What Should a Master of Israel Have Known? Ezekiel 36

When Jesus says Nicodemus should have known these things, the most powerful place to look is Ezekiel 36. This is where the words **clean water**, **new heart**, **new spirit**, and **my spirit within you** are already joined together. Jesus was not creating a strange phrase. He was unlocking a prophetic promise.

Ezekiel 36:20-28

> *And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

This is not just 'be a better person.' This is God saying, **I will cleanse what is unclean. I will remove the stony heart. I will give a new heart. I will put My Spirit within you. I will cause you to walk. I will restore dwelling. I will make you My people.** That is almost exactly the world Jesus opens in John 3.

Now the phrase 'water and Spirit' is no longer isolated. Ezekiel gives the background grammar: **water for cleansing, Spirit for inward life, and God Himself as the source of both.** Nicodemus should have known the promise because he was a master of Israel. Jesus was not shaming him for missing a clever devotional thought. He was pressing him into the prophetic promise of Israel's restoration.

When Jesus says, in Luke 24, the scriptures are about him, this opens up new imaginations to what the biblical authors are saying:

> **Luke 24:27 (KJV)**
> *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*
>
> **Luke 24:44 (KJV)**
> *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*

Key turn: John 3:5 is not merely about private religious language. It is kingdom-entry language tied to Israel's promised cleansing, new heart, and Spirit-indwelling.

3. Water Was Already an Identity Story: Exodus and the Red Sea

Ezekiel is the hub, but he is not the only rope. Israel already had a water-story. The nation was brought out of bondage, through the sea, under the cloud, into the wilderness, and toward covenant dwelling. Paul later says this was a kind of baptism into Moses.

Exodus 14:21-22

> *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*

1 Corinthians 10:1-5

> *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*

That is where the study starts to glow. Israel had water. Israel had passage. Israel had covenant identity. Israel had manna. Israel had spiritual drink. Israel had the Rock, and Paul says, **that Rock was Christ.** Yet Paul says God was not pleased with many of them. So external participation in the visible people did not guarantee inward covenant life.

So, it is important to recognize what just took place, in John 2, John says that Passover just took place, and then Nicodemus came to meet Jesus. The bible does not name feasts, or dates without reason. This Passover mention should have primed Nicodemus for the first Passover, and the gospel is written in Greek. The Septuigent is the Greek version of the old testament, so, looking at word use of John's gospel, and the old testament reveals a pattern.

Exodus/wilderness identity:

θεὸν τὸν γεννήσαντά σε ἐγκατέλιπες
"You abandoned/forgot God, the One who begot/birthed you…"
— **Deuteronomy 32:18 LXX**

That **γεννήσαντά** is from **γεννάω**, the same word-family used in **John 3:5**:

ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος
"Unless one is born of water and Spirit…"
— **John 3:5**

Exodus gives the event and sonship language; Deuteronomy gives the direct "begot/birthed" vocabulary looking back on that event.

The chain is:

Exodus 4:22–23 — "Israel is my son, my firstborn."
Exodus 12 — Passover night, death of Egypt's firstborn, Israel released.
Exodus 14 — Israel passes through the water.
Exodus 14:21 / 15:10 — the sea is moved by wind/ruach; the water + wind/spirit connection.
Deuteronomy 32:18 — God is the One who "begot/birthed" Israel.
John 3:5 — Jesus tells Nicodemus that being "born of water" is not enough; one must be born of water **and Spirit**.

This may or may not seem interesting, but pattern in bible is important, especially in the Old Testament, because everything pointing forward is spoken in part, or out of sequence, or vague, because if the enemy knew what it was that God was doing, they never would have killed Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:7–8:

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

This is a great time to bring up Ephesians 3:10, because we are about to see that God is revealing in his old testament word, and new testament revelation, and the book of revelation his manifold wisdom.

> **Ephesians 3:10 (KJV)**
> *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,*

Now imagine Nicodemus sitting with Jesus. He has Israel's water-story behind him. He has Moses, the Red Sea, washings, temple categories, Abrahamic identity, and teacher status. But Jesus tells him that he still must be born of water and Spirit. In other words, **old water-identity is not enough unless God gives the promised Spirit-life.**

> **1 Corinthians 10:11**
> *Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

Paul does not treat the Exodus as dead history. He treats it as written for us. That gives permission to read John 3 with the Exodus in the room, while still letting Ezekiel 36 remain the central prophetic background.

4. The Rock That Begat Israel - And the Rock Who Is Christ

There is another verse that adds weight to the birth-language. Moses says Israel forgot the Rock that begat them. That is not mainly individual birth imagery. It is national formation language. Israel was a people brought forth by God, formed by the Rock, delivered through water, fed in the wilderness, and yet able to forget the very Rock who birthed them.

> **Deuteronomy 32:18**
> *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.*

Read that beside Paul's words: **that Rock was Christ.** Suddenly John 3 is not small. Nicodemus belongs to a nation begotten by the Rock, brought through water, and taught by the law. But Jesus says the kingdom requires birth from above, birth of water and Spirit. That does not erase Israel's story. It reveals what Israel's story always needed: **a people not only outwardly formed, but inwardly cleansed and Spirit-born.**

> **Romans 9:6-8**
> *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

> **Galatians 3:7**
> *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

> **Galatians 3:29**
> *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

This is not replacement language. It is fulfillment language. Christ is the true Seed, the true Rock, the true Israel, the true source of living water. Those joined to Him by faith become Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise. **The boundary is not flesh-only descent. The boundary is Christ.**

5. John Keeps the Water Moving: From Nicodemus to the Woman at the Well

John does something brilliant. Immediately after the conversation with Nicodemus, he takes the reader to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Nicodemus has every religious advantage. The woman has almost

every visible disadvantage. Nicodemus is Jewish, male, educated, Jerusalem-connected, and respected. The woman is Samaritan, morally exposed, outside Jerusalem's accepted worship system, and standing at a well tied to Jacob. Yet Jesus speaks water-language to both.

John 4:10-14

> *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

John 4:23-24

> *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

Now the pattern is impossible to miss. Nicodemus has Israel's public water-history; the Samaritan woman has Jacob's ancestral well. Jesus tells Nicodemus he needs water and Spirit from above. Jesus tells the woman that Jacob's well is not enough because He gives water that becomes an inward spring unto everlasting life. Then He immediately speaks of worship **in spirit and in truth.**

John is teaching the reader how to hear Jesus. Old covenant identity, ancestral water, sacred locations, and religious argument cannot produce eternal life by themselves. **The Son gives the water. The Spirit makes it living. The Father receives worship in Spirit and truth.**

6. John Finally Interprets the Living Water: The Spirit

John does not leave the symbol floating. In John 7, Jesus cries out during the feast and invites the thirsty to come to Him and drink. Then John gives the interpretation plainly.

John 7:37-39

> *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

This is a controlling verse. John says the living water speaks of the Spirit, received by those who believe, after Jesus is glorified. That reaches backward into John 3 and John 4 and forward to the cross, resurrection, and Revelation. **Water is not only a ritual picture. It is a life-source picture.**

Then John shows the strange, holy moment at the cross: blood and water come from the side of Jesus. No doctrine should be built on imagination alone, but John deliberately records the detail. In a Gospel already loaded with water, birth, Spirit, cleansing, life, and glory, this is not throwaway information.

John's movement: born of water and Spirit - living water - rivers of living water - blood and water from Christ - risen breath and Spirit - river of life in Revelation, flowing from the throne.

7. Washing and Anointing: The Priestly Pattern Underneath the Story

There is also a priestly rope. Before Aaron entered priestly service, he was washed with water and anointed with oil. This does not mean John 3 is only about priesthood, and it does not mean Jesus needed cleansing from sin. It means Scripture already had a grammar where washing and anointing marked holy service.

Exodus 29:4

> *And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.*

Exodus 29:7

Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.

Leviticus 8:6

And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

Leviticus 8:12

And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

Now watch Jesus at the Jordan. He is baptized in water. The Spirit descends. The Father identifies Him as the beloved Son. Then He goes into wilderness testing and public ministry. That is not random sequencing.

Matthew 3:13-17

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Acts 10:38

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

So the pattern is visible: **water, Spirit/anointing, Father's approval, wilderness victory, ministry.** Jesus is not being cleansed as a sinner. He is fulfilling righteousness as the obedient Son, true Israel, and anointed Servant. This also protects John 3 from a flat reading. Water and Spirit language lives inside a whole Bible pattern of cleansing, identity, anointing, and service.

8. Acts Shows the Pattern Without Making It Mechanical

John gives the theology; Acts shows the historical rollout. After the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, Peter stands in Jerusalem and connects repentance, baptism in Jesus' name, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is not a new disconnected ritual. It is John 3 after the cross and resurrection.

Acts 2:38-39

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Notice the language: **the promise**. Peter is not inventing a new category. He is announcing that the promised Spirit has come through the crucified and risen Christ. The water-sign now belongs to Jesus' name because the cleansing and Spirit-life promised in the prophets are fulfilled in Him.

But Acts also protects us from making the order mechanical. In Acts 10, the Spirit falls on Gentiles while Peter is still speaking, before water baptism. Then Peter commands water baptism because God has already given the inward reality.

Acts 10:44-48

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

That is important. Water is not meaningless, but water is not magic. Baptism is the commanded covenant sign of repentance, cleansing, and identification with Christ. The Spirit is the inward reality God gives. Faith receives Christ. God is not trapped by the sign, and the sign is not emptied by God's freedom. **Acts 2 shows the normal proclamation pattern; Acts 10 shows God Himself can give the Spirit first and then require the sign as witness.**

This also helps with the thief on the cross. The thief was not an Acts 2 case after Pentecost. He was dying beside the King before the public New Covenant outpouring. He confessed guilt, feared God, confessed

Christ's innocence, and trusted Jesus' kingdom. Jesus personally promised him paradise. The thief does not destroy John 3. He protects it from becoming mechanical. Christ saves; signs serve Christ.

Luke 23:40-43

> *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

9. The Holy Name: Why Ezekiel 36 Is About God's Character on Display

Ezekiel 36 is not only about people getting forgiven. It is about God's name being profaned, then sanctified. In Scripture, name is not merely a sound or a label. Name carries revealed character, reputation, authority, and public witness. Israel bore the name of the Lord, but their uncleanness among the nations testified falsely about Him.

Ezekiel 36:22-23

> *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.*

That sentence should stop the reader. God says He will be sanctified **in you** before their eyes. How? By cleansing, giving a new heart, putting His Spirit within, restoring dwelling, making the land fruitful, and reversing reproach. God's people had made His name look common, weak, defeated, and unclean. God answers by making His character visible through a cleansed and Spirit-filled people.

Matthew 6:9-10

> *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

Now the Lord's Prayer sounds deeper. **Hallowed be thy name** is not a slogan. It is an Ezekiel prayer: Father, set apart Your name as holy; vindicate Your character; make Your will visible on earth through Your kingdom people.

John 17:6

> *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

John 17:26

> *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

Jesus does not merely pronounce the Father's name. He manifests it. He displays the Father's character perfectly. Then believers are brought into Him, kept in the name, sanctified by truth, and sent into the world. Paul says the same thing in righteousness language.

2 Corinthians 5:21

> *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

This is not empty theory. In Christ, God's people become the displayed righteousness of God. Not God's essence, not independent righteousness, not self-made holiness - but **His righteousness in Him**, His name no longer merely spoken over a people, but formed and displayed in them by Spirit-life.

10. Nations, Powers, and the Manifold Wisdom of God

Ezekiel keeps saying that the nations will know that He is the Lord. That is not merely information transfer. It is public demonstration. God acts in history so that Israel, the nations, and even the unseen powers behind idolatrous systems are forced to see that He alone is Lord.

Ephesians 3:9-10

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

That is why this study cannot be reduced to 'a neat baptism verse.' The church itself becomes a demonstration object. Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean, near and far, are brought into one body in Christ. The Spirit-filled people display God's wisdom to principalities and powers.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Now the ropes are together: born of God, born from above, born of water and Spirit, gathered from the nations, built into a dwelling place, and made a habitation of God through the Spirit. This is not detached from Israel's promises. It is their Christ-centered fulfillment.

John 10:16

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

The one flock under one Shepherd fits Ezekiel, John, Paul, and Revelation. The old division is not healed by pretending doctrine does not matter. It is healed because Christ is the source: **one Shepherd, one Spirit, one dwelling, one promise-family, one restored people of God.**

11. Ezekiel Does Not Stop at the Heart - It Reaches Eden and Revelation

One of the most overlooked parts of Ezekiel 36 is that the promise does not stop with the heart. It moves from cleansing, to Spirit, to obedience, to dwelling, to land, to fruit, to rebuilt waste places, to Eden language. That means John 3 is connected to new creation, not only individual conversion.

Ezekiel 36:33-36

Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.

There it is: **like the garden of Eden.** The promise is cleansing, Spirit, obedience, dwelling, rebuilding, planting, and Eden restoration. John later records the final form of that promise in Revelation.

Revelation 21:1-5

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

Revelation 22:1-5

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Now Ezekiel 36 and John 3 are not small anymore. Ezekiel says God will cleanse His people, put His Spirit within them, rebuild what was ruined, make the land like Eden, and make the nations know that He is the Lord. Revelation says the river of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, the tree of life is restored, the nations are healed, the curse is gone, God's servants see His face, and His name is on their foreheads.

Final peg: Water is the sign and image of cleansing, passage, and life. The Spirit is the inward reality. Christ is the source. The Father sanctifies His name by making a cleansed, Spirit-born people who finally dwell with Him in restored creation.

The Whole Chain in One Flow

John 3:5 is not a lonely verse. John 1 already says the children of God are born not of blood, flesh, or man's will, but of God. Jesus then tells Nicodemus, a master of Israel, that a man must be born from above, of water and Spirit. Ezekiel 36 had already promised clean water, a new heart, a new spirit, and God's Spirit within His people. Exodus and Paul show that Israel passed through water and drank from the Rock, but outward covenant identity was not enough. Deuteronomy says Israel forgot the Rock that begat them, and Paul says that Rock was Christ. John 4 shows Jesus giving living water beyond Jacob's well. John 7 says the living water is the Spirit. John 19 shows blood and water from Christ's side. John 20 shows the risen Jesus breathing and saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Revelation 21-22 shows the final river, tree, city, name, healed nations, no curse, and God dwelling with His people.

That is the WOW without inventing doctrine. It is not a new gospel. It is the old gospel with the biblical wires exposed. Jesus did not give Nicodemus a random phrase. He opened the doorway into the whole promise of God: **new birth from above, cleansing by God, Spirit-life within, true Israel formed in Christ, living water flowing from the Son, the name of God sanctified in His people, and Eden restored under the throne of God and of the Lamb.**

So when Jesus says, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' the verse should not be rushed. It should be heard with Ezekiel, Moses, the Rock, John, Paul, and Revelation all standing in the room. A person cannot enter the kingdom by ancestry, religious status, moral willpower, or old covenant familiarity. A person must receive the life that comes **of God**: cleansed by His promise, made alive by His Spirit, joined to His Son, and carried toward the final river of life.

A Final Word to the Careful Reader

The point is not to make the Bible harder than it is. The point is to notice that Scripture is deeper than a first pass usually reveals. A simple reader can be saved by trusting Christ. At the same time, a careful reader can spend a lifetime watching the same Christ-centered pattern open in more places. Those two truths are not enemies. Simplicity and depth belong together because God wrote a book where children can drink, and fathers can still find wells they have not yet drawn from.

John 3:5 can still be preached simply: you must be born again by God's Spirit. But once the verse is placed back into John's Gospel and Ezekiel's promise, it becomes brighter. Jesus is not merely answering an individual question about heaven. He is announcing the long-promised restoration of God's people. The unclean must be cleansed. The stone heart must become flesh. The Spirit must dwell within. The old water-stories must find their fulfillment. The Rock must be recognized. The Son must be lifted up. The thirsty must come to Him and drink.

That is why the discovery should create reverence, not novelty. This is not a secret doctrine hidden from the church. It is a set of biblical connections that have been sitting in the open text, waiting to be chased with patience. The excitement comes from realizing that Moses, Ezekiel, John, Paul, and Revelation are not speaking in disconnected religious vocabulary. They are all bearing witness to one plan: God cleansing and restoring image-bearers through Christ by the Spirit, so His name is hallowed in earth as it is in heaven.

So the next time John 3:5 is read, it should not sound like an isolated proof-text. It should sound like a door opening. Behind it stands John 1: born of God. Behind it stands Ezekiel 36: clean water, new heart, and Spirit within. Behind it stands Exodus: through water, under the cloud, drinking from the Rock. Beside it stands John 4: living water beyond Jacob's well. Above it stands John 7: the Spirit given after Jesus is glorified. Beneath it stands the cross: blood and water from the pierced Son. Ahead of it stands Revelation: the river of life, the tree of life, healed nations, no curse, and the name of God on His servants forever.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (public domain).

Bonus Reading:

Jesus at the Temple Steps: Siloam Water, Songs of Ascent, and the River That Finally Found Its Source

The scene in **John 7** is one of those places where the Bible stops being a flat page and becomes a living temple map. Jesus is at the **Feast of Tabernacles / Sukkot**, the feast of booths, wilderness memory, harvest joy, rain prayer, kingdom hope, and God dwelling with His people. The people are remembering the wilderness. They are remembering God's provision. They are praying for rain. They are celebrating with branches. They are watching priests bring water up from **Siloam**. And then, at the climactic moment of the feast, Jesus stands and cries:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."
— John 7:37 KJV

That is not a random devotional line. That is a claim.

Historically, the Temple water ceremony involved priests going down to the **Pool of Siloam**, filling a golden vessel with water, bringing it back up into the Temple area, entering through the Water Gate, and pouring the water out at the altar, together with the sacrificial rhythm of the morning offering. One source summarizes the procession as priests going from the Temple to Siloam with singing and flute-playing, filling a golden flask, returning through the Water Gate with shofar blasts, and offering the water libation with wine in silver bowls at the altar. Another summary notes that the priest descended to Siloam amid music, celebration, and the singing of **Isaiah 12:3** — "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" — then returned up to the Temple and poured the water into a silver basin by the altar.

The Mishnah tradition places Levites with instruments on the fifteen steps between the Court of Israel and the Court of Women, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of Ascents.

That means the scene is not merely "priests with water." It is **water plus ascent plus song plus altar plus Temple plus prophetic hope**.

And then Jesus stands there.

Not beside a private well, like John 4. Not in a hidden night conversation, like John 3. Not at the Jordan, like His baptism. Here He stands publicly in the Temple-feast world and says, in effect:

You have watched the water come up to the Temple. Now come to Me.
You have sung about wells of salvation. I am the salvation.
You have prayed for water from God. I am the source.
You have poured water at the altar. I am the true altar, true Temple, true meeting-place, and true life-giver.

John then gives the interpretation so nobody has to guess:

"But this spake he of the Spirit…"
— John 7:39 KJV

That line locks the whole study. John's water is not only ritual water. It is **Spirit-water**. John 3 / John 4 / John 7 pattern are exactly right: John 3 says one must be born of **water and Spirit**; John 4 says Jesus gives living water that becomes an inward spring; John 7 says rivers of living water flow from those who believe, and John identifies that water as the Spirit.

Now bring in Ezekiel, and the whole scene gets explosive.

Ezekiel saw water flowing from the Temple. Not a trickle that stayed symbolic. It became ankle-deep, knee-deep, waist-deep, then a river that could not be crossed. Wherever the river went, life came. Trees grew. Fruit came. Leaves healed. The dead places were touched by life. That is why the Sukkot water libation had eschatological force. A scholarly discussion of the ritual notes the tradition that the Water Gate was associated with the future water flowing from under the Temple threshold, explicitly tying the ritual path to Ezekiel's vision of Temple water becoming a healing river.

So when Jesus cries out in John 7, He is standing inside a living prophecy-stage.

The priests bring water **to** the Temple.
Ezekiel says water will flow **from** the Temple.
Jesus says, "Come **to Me** and drink."
John says, "This He spake of the Spirit."
Then, after Jesus is glorified, the Spirit is given.

That is the turn.

The old ceremony said: **Lord, send water.**
Jesus says: **The water comes through Me.**

This is why John 2 matters: Jesus already identified His body as the true Temple — "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." So by John 7, He is not merely a teacher commenting on a feast. He is the true Temple standing in the Temple courts, announcing the river that Ezekiel saw. The stone building had rituals pointing toward life. Jesus is the life.

Then John 19 becomes almost unbearable in its beauty. The true Temple is pierced, and **blood and water** come from His side. John does not record that detail by accident. In a Gospel already loaded with birth, water, Spirit, cleansing, life, and glory, the pierced side is a signpost. The altar has become a Man. The Temple has become flesh. The living water begins to flow through the crucified and glorified Son. Water is the sign and image of cleansing, passage, and life; the Spirit is the inward reality; Christ is the source.

Now Revelation completes the map.

In Genesis, a river flows from Eden.
In Ezekiel, a river flows from the Temple.
In John, living water flows from Christ by the Spirit.
In Revelation, the river flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

That means the river has moved from **garden**, to **Temple**, to **Christ**, to **Spirit-filled people**, to **New Jerusalem**. This is not a metaphor wandering around looking for a home. It is one Bible-long current. Your rewritten study captures the final chain as: John 3 water-Spirit birth, John 4 living water, John 7 Spirit-rivers, John 19 blood and water, John 20 Spirit-breath, and Revelation 21–22 river, tree, city, name, healed nations, no curse, and God dwelling with His people.

So the fascinating summary peg is this:

At Sukkot, the priests carried water from Siloam up to the Temple and poured it out while Israel sang, rejoiced, and prayed for salvation-water. But Jesus stood in that feast-world and revealed the hidden center: the water was never finally about Siloam, the basin, the altar, or the stone Temple. The water was about Him. He is the true Temple from whom Ezekiel's river flows, the true Rock who gives drink in the wilderness, the true altar where blood and water meet, and the glorified Son who gives the Spirit. What Israel carried upward in symbol, Christ pours downward in reality: living water from God to man, cleansing the unclean, reviving the dead, forming true worshipers, and running all the way to Revelation's river of life.

PPSG Flow: From Desire and Death in Adam to Water, Spirit, and Glory in Christ

The Bible shows two competing sequences working in mankind.

The first sequence is the Adam-death sequence: **desire → sin → death**. James says that every man is drawn away by his own desire; when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death (James 1:14–15). Paul then names the larger condition: “in Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22), and mankind is “dead in trespasses and sins” before being made alive by God (Ephesians 2:1–5). This is not merely bad behavior. It is death-rule, sin-rule, and Adam-identity.

The gospel sequence begins when the dead hear the word of Christ. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Jesus says, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life” and is passed “from death unto life” (John 5:24). The hearer is awakened by the word, perceives truth, and becomes persuaded/convinced. Some hear and do not perceive, but the good-ground hearer hears, understands, and brings forth fruit (Matthew 13:19–23). Paul also reasoned and persuaded hearers concerning Christ (Acts 18:4; Acts 28:23–24).

Then the convinced hearer believes. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Belief is not mere information; it is receiving Christ, and John says those who receive Him and believe on His name are given power to become the sons of God, born not of blood, flesh, or man’s will, but of God (John 1:12–13). This cuts off ancestry-only confidence, effort-only confidence, and religious-status confidence.

Belief then confesses. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9–10). The mouth and heart come together: inward persuasion becomes public allegiance. The believer no longer stands in Adam’s identity, but confesses Christ as Lord.

The believer then lives by faith. “The just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). Paul says, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Faith receives Christ, lives from Christ, and continues in Christ. It is not self-made righteousness; it is union with the faithful One.

Then God performs the water-and-Spirit work promised beforehand. Ezekiel promised, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean,” and “I will put my spirit within you” (Ezekiel 36:25–27). Jesus tells Nicodemus that a man must be born “of water and of the Spirit” to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Titus calls this “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). Water marks cleansing; the Spirit gives inward life.

The Spirit washes, sanctifies, and sets the believer apart in Christ. “Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). This is the Ezekiel promise in action: the unclean are cleansed, the stony heart is replaced, the Spirit is placed within, and the people of God are caused to walk in His ways.

The Spirit also adopts. Believers receive “the Spirit of adoption,” by whom they cry, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, “Abba, Father,” so they are no more servants but sons and heirs through Christ (Galatians 4:4–7). The believer is not merely forgiven as a legal case; the believer is brought into sonship and inheritance.

The Spirit seals. After hearing the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, and after believing, believers are "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," which is the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession (Ephesians 1:13–14). The seal marks belonging, promise, protection, and future inheritance.

So the believer now stands in Christ, washed, sanctified, adopted, sealed, and living by faith, while still waiting for the fullness of salvation, final justification/vindication, and glorification. Romans says those whom God justified, He also glorified (Romans 8:30), yet believers still groan, waiting for adoption in its fullness, "the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). Peter says believers are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5).

The final movement is glory. In Adam, desire gives birth to sin, and sin gives birth to death. In Christ, hearing gives rise to faith, faith receives Christ, confession declares allegiance, the Spirit washes and sanctifies, adoption gives sonship, sealing guarantees inheritance, and glorification completes the image-bearing purpose of God. The end is not merely escape from death, but clothed righteousness, restored dwelling, and new creation. The bride is made ready, clothed in fine linen, "the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:7–8), and New Jerusalem comes down as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2). The curse is gone, the river of life flows, the servants of God see His face, His name is in their foreheads, and they reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:1–5).

PPSG in one line:

Desire → Sin → Death in Adam → Hearing → Perceiving → Persuasion/Conviction → Believing → Confession → Living by Faith → Washing by the Spirit → Sanctification → Adoption → Sealing → Waiting for Final Salvation and Vindication → Glorification → Clothed Righteousness and New Creation in Christ.