

THEORIES OF "WATER" IN JOHN 3:5

By Mark Moore

- 1) Contrast between Water and Spirit
 - A. Rituals
 1. Jewish Ritual Cleansings
 2. John's Baptism (which the Pharisees rejected)
 - a. Without the Spirit
 - b. Odd Vocabulary
 - c. Played down (1:23, 26; 3:30)
 - A. Physical (Fits the context well)
 3. Semen--Rabbinic reference to "drops"
 4. Amniotic Fluid
 - a. No linguistic parallels
 - b. Both nouns are governed by EK and connected by KAI
 - c. Vv. 3, 5, 6b & 7 appear to be parallels
 - d. Water and Spirit are anarthrous thus descript
- II. Unity between Water and Spirit
 - B. Symbolic
 5. Torah (cf. Ja 1:18; Eph 5:6; 1 Pt 1:23-25)
 6. O.T. imagery of wind and water:
 - a. Cleansing--Ez 36:25-27
 - b. Renewal/Creation--Gen 1:2; Joel 2:28-29; Isaiah 44:3
 - c. Quickening men to life--Is 32:15-17; 55:1-3; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:8.
 - C. Baptism of Jesus (Jn 3:22; Mt 3:16; Jn 1:33; cf. Jn 7:37-39)
 7. Christian Baptism (Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 19:1-7; Titus 3:5):
 - a. Christian Baptism is anachronistic and thus irrelevant to Nicodemus, et. al.
 - b. Why would Jesus rebuke Nicodemus (v. 10) for something he could not do?
 8. Jesus' baptism (cf. 1:33) was transitional--it led to Christian baptism. Thus, John alludes to it as he writes reflectively after 90 A.D. (cf. 1:13; 2:22; 6:53-56; 7:38-39).

CONSIDERATIONS OF JOHN 3:3-5

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- I. Nicodemus' understanding of:
 - A. Kingdom--Jesus radically changed his concept:
 - 1. Physical to Spiritual
 - 2. Added New Birth
 - 3. Not merely "Rule" but "Sphere"
 - B. Water & Spirit
 - 1. Cleansing, Ez. 36:25-27.
 - 2. Renewal/Creation, Gen. 1:2; Joel 2:28-29; Is. 44:3.
 - 3. Quickening men to life, Is. 32:15-17; 55:1-3; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Zech. 14:8; Ez. 47:9.

- II. Ministry of John the Baptist:
 - A. Included Baptism (Jn. 1:25, 28, 31), but without the Spirit (Jn. 1:33; Mt. 3:11).
 - B. Preached the Kingdom (Mt. 3:2).
 - C. Pharisees rejected John (Lk. 7:30).

- III. Grammar/Context
 - A. Both nouns, Spirit and Water, are governed by "EK" and connected by "KAI."
 - B. Vv. 3, 5, 6b and 7 appear to be parallels.
 - C. Jesus baptize shortly after this (John 3:22; 4:1).
 - D. Water and Spirit are anarthrous, thus descriptive, not specific.

- IV. Parallel Passages
 - A. The Spirit accompanied Jesus' baptism (Mt. 3:16; Jn. 1:33).
 - B. Water and Spirit are connected with Christian Baptism (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 19:1-7; Titus 3:5).
 - C. The coming of the H.S. was predicted in relation to water (John 7:37-39).

- V. John writes reflectively after 90 A.D.--cf. 1:13; 2:22; 6:53-56; 7:38-39.

- VI. Greek and Latin fathers interpret this as Christian Baptism as well as most modern expositors.