Born of Water and Spirit (John 3:5)

What does it mean to be born of the water and the spirit? John 3:5 is often used by those who believe baptism is essential, so let's look at it in the context of scripture:

John 3:5-7

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. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

NKJV

Note that he equates the water with the flesh, being born in the flesh, and being born again with being born in the spirit. This is not speaking about water baptism. Different topic.

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