

THEOPNEUSTOS

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED

By Arlen L. Chirwood

II Timothy 3:16a in the KJV reads,

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

The words, “given by inspiration of God,” are a translation of one Greek word, *Theopneustos*, meaning “God-breathed.” This is a compound word comprised of *Theos* (“God”) and *pneuma* (“breath” in this particular usage [this is also the word used for “Spirit” in the N. T. — the Holy Spirit, man’s spirit, and the use of spirit in general; also “wind” in John 3:8]).

That which is meant by and the implications of Scripture being God-breathed are given in a somewhat simple manner in Scripture, but one has to look at and compare related parts of both Testaments before he can really begin to see and understand that which is involved. A person has to reference passages in one Testament, then passages in the other. He has to com-

pare Scripture with Scripture, *i.e.*, he has to compare “spiritual things with spiritual.”

Note first of all Heb. 4:12:

“The word of God is quick [*lit.*, ‘alive’], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword...”

Now, the question: Why is the Word of God “alive,” “powerful,” and “sharper than any twoedged sword”? The answer: *Because of its origin.* The Word is “*Theopneustos*”; The Word is “God-breathed.”

But, what does that mean? And why is the Word “alive” because of its origin? This is where one has to go back to beginning points in the Old Testament and find the first mention in Scripture of God bringing a matter to pass through the use of His breath.

This is necessary not only because of the need to compare Scripture with Scripture but also because of a principle of Biblical interpretation referred to as, “the first-mention principle.” This principle has to do with *unchangeableness*, and it centers around an unchangeable structure of the Word given by the unchangeable God.

Because of the inherent nature of the Word, the first time a subject is mentioned in Scripture, a pattern, a mold is established at that point which remains unchanged throughout all subsequent Scripture.

Remaining within this principle, the first time one finds the breath of God men-

tioned in Scripture is in Gen. 2:7, in connection with life imparted to man; and, consequently, at this beginning point, this verse connects *life with the breath of God after an unchangeable fashion.* God formed and fashioned man from the dust of the ground, but man was not created alive. Life was subsequently imparted through God breathing into man’s “nostrils the breath of life,” resulting in man becoming “a living soul.”

Thus, at this point in Scripture, the unchangeable connection between *God’s breath and life* is established and set. Only God can produce life, and any time life is produced beyond this point it *must always* be through the one means set forth at the beginning, revealed in Gen. 2:7.

The whole of the matter can be illustrated after a simple fashion from a later Old Testament passage — the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel chapter thirty-seven.

These bones are presented as lifeless, and the question is asked in verse three, “Son of man, can these bones live?” Then note in verse five how life is to be effected:

“Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.”

Verse eight, revealing the condition of the bones prior to God acting, states, “there was no breath in them.” Then there is a cry in verse nine, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon those slain, that

they may live.” And the end of the matter is then given in verse ten: “...breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”

(Ezekiel 37, in its entirety, outlines events of a yet future day. It has to do with that time when Messiah returns and *life* (spiritual) is restored to “the whole house of Israel [those alive at that time (possessing natural life), with the ‘house’ being made complete through the resurrection of O. T. saints]” [Ex. 13:19; cf. Ezek. 36:24-28].

The remnant in the land today comprises only a small part of “the whole house of Israel”; and this remnant, in relation to God’s breath, can only be described after the same fashion as Jews elsewhere in the world — *without breath* and thus, *spiritually dead*.

“The whole house of Israel” is pictured today after one fashion in Scripture, a condition which has existed for two millennia — *very dry bones, without breath*. But they will one day live. When? The answer from Scripture:

“After two days [after 2,000 years] will he revive us: in the third day [in the third 1,000-year period, the Messianic Era] he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight” [Hosea 6:2].)

Thus, there is the information from the Old Testament to show what is meant by the statement in II Tim. 3:16 (“All scripture is God-breathed...”), to show the con-

nection between this verse and Heb. 4:12 (“For the word of God is alive...”), and to show the full implications involved by that which is further stated about the whole of Scripture in both passages.

(Note also Luke 8:55; James 2:26; Rev. 13:15. The word *pneuma* appears in each verse, referring to “life”; and the word should be understood as “breath” in these passages.)

Then there is the inseparable connection between the Spirit (the *Pneuma*) and the Word: “For the prophecy [referring to written revelation] came not in old time by the will of man: but holy [set apart] men of God spake as they were moved [borne along] by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21; cf. vv. 19, 20).

The Word is “God-breathed,” and thus “alive,” *because of* the Spirit’s inseparable connection with the Word. He is the One Who gave the Word to man through man, and He is the One presently in the world to guide man “into all truth” through the use of this Word (John 16:13).

The *Pneuma* (Spirit/Breath) is not only the One Who gave the Word after this fashion in past time, but He is also the One Who does a work, after a similar fashion, with respect to man’s regeneration during the present time. It is the present work of the *Pneuma* (Spirit/Breath) in man’s regeneration which produces life (there must be

a *breathing in* for man to pass “from death unto life” [cf. Gen. 1:2; 2:7; John 5:24; Eph. 2:1, 5, 8]); and the *Pneuma* (Spirit/Breath) not only produces this life (based on Christ’s finished work at Calvary), but He presently indwells the one to whom He has imparted life in order to lead and guide that individual into an understanding — from immaturity to maturity — of the God-breathed Word which He Himself previously imparted to man through man.

Thus, it is the breath of God producing life in unregenerate man today, through the instrumentality of the Spirit, based on the Son’s finished work. And that new life is nurtured and sustained by a continued work of the Spirit, through the use of that which is itself the breath of God, and, accordingly, living.

The Holy Spirit uses *only* that which is living to nourish and nurture that which has been made alive. Spiritual growth from immaturity to maturity requires spiritual nourishment, which is derived from only one source — *The God-Breathed Word*.

Thus, the importance of *the Word* in one’s possession and *the ministry of the Spirit* in one’s life.

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