

THE NESHAMAH

THE BREATH OF GOD

ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR LIFE

By Arlen L. Chirwood

The roots of all Biblical doctrine can be found in the Book of Genesis. This is the book of beginnings; and *all Scripture beyond Genesis must, after some fashion, reach back and draw from this book.*

The creation of Adam from a portion of the ground, and the removal of a rib from Adam's side, occurred on the sixth day of the restoration account in Genesis chapter one. But *the methods* which God used to bring about both Adam's creation and the formation of Eve from a part of Adam's body were not revealed until subsequent summary statements in chapter two.

Most of the second chapter is taken up with certain specifics concerning that which had previously occurred on the sixth day in the preceding chapter, and the account of these things is rich beyond degree in Biblical study. The second chapter of Genesis is the point where the origin of numerous Biblical doctrines can be traced, doctrines which cannot be properly understood apart from this chapter.

In the account of the creation of man we are given an insight into certain truths concerning "life," derived from God. The means which God used in both man's creation and the subsequent impartation of life to His new creation are given in Gen. 2:7:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground [or, 'a lump of earth'], and breathed into his nostrils the breath [the *Neshamah*] of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7).

First, man existed as a lifeless form, previously fashioned from a portion of the ground. Creation in and of itself did not produce life in man. Life was imparted *only after man's creation*, a life produced by means of the *Breath of God*. And it is here that "life" in relation to man is *first mentioned* in Scripture.

And through the impartation of this life, an unchangeable principle is set forth. God, at the very beginning, set forth the unchangeable means which He would use to impart life to the one without life, at any future point in time — *physical* or *spiritual* life.

The Hebrew word translated "breath" in Gen. 2:7 is *Neshamah*. The *Neshamah* of God produced "life." The word "God" in this verse is a translation of the plural noun, *Elohim*, alluding to the fact — as clearly seen elsewhere in Scripture — that not only the Father, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit were instrumental in producing this life (*e.g., cf.* Gen. 1:1-3; John 1:1-5). Thus, man's life in the beginning was derived from the triune God through what is called the *Neshamah*.

Genesis 2:7 provides insights into things far beyond the simple fact that God created man and then imparted life to man. This verse provides insights into man's salvation today — both the salvation of the spirit and the salvation of the soul.

First, the impartation of life to unredeemed man, who is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), *must follow the pattern (type) established in Genesis*. Unredeemed man, as Adam prior to the impartation of the *Neshamah* of God, is lifeless; and, if he is to possess life, *it must be derived through the same means as life was originally imparted to Adam.*

Second, once this life is imparted, *it must be continued and sustained.*

In this respect, Scripture clearly reveals that the *Neshamah* of God is inseparably connected *with life in relation to man from beginning to end.*

A first-mention principle was established in Gen. 2:7, revealing that "life" — past, present, future

— must always be acquired through the same means set forth in this verse. *God alone* initially "imparts" and subsequently "continues" and "sustains" life; and this is always accomplished, in its entirety, through *the Neshamah of God, the Breath of God.*

Impartation of Life to the Unsaved

Unregenerate man today comes into a right relationship with God solely through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit on the basis of Christ's finished work at Calvary. Through the work of the Spirit, man passes "from death unto life" (John 5:24).

The word "Spirit" in the Greek text is *Pneuma*, a word which also means "breath." It is used in the sense of "breath" in the New Testament through showing life being produced by "breathing in" or death being wrought by "breathing out."

In Luke 8:55 life was restored to a young girl by her "spirit [breath]" returning, and in Luke 23:46 Christ terminated His life on the Cross by giving "up the spirit [*lit.*, He 'breathed out']" (*cf.* James 2:26).

The Holy Spirit is the One Who generates life in lifeless man, and the expression used in both the Hebrew and Greek texts relative to this life being produced is "breathing in." God, through the instrumentality of the Spirit, "breathes life into" unregenerate man today.

The impartation of life to man in Gen. 2:7 though is not the original type dealing with the work of the Spirit in relation to man's salvation. The original type is found in the opening verses of the first chapter, and Gen. 2:7 forms a subsequent type, providing additional details. And this verse, providing the first mention of "life" in relation to man, must be in complete agreement with and understood in the light of that revealed in the original type.

The original type in Gen. 1:2b-5 reads:

"...darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness...”

These verses outline the beginning of the restoration of a creation which was brought into a state of ruin through an act of Satan (*the earth* becoming a chaos because of Satan’s aspirations to be “like the most High” [Gen. 1:2a; Isa. 14:12-14]). And these verses, in turn, set forth in type the beginning of the restoration of a creation which was brought into a ruined state through another act of Satan (effecting Adam’s fall, through the woman, by using a similar means to the one having previously brought about his own fall — “...you will be like God” [Gen. 3:1ff]).

This established pattern (type) relative to the restoration of a ruined material creation relates exactly how the restoration of man — a subsequent ruined creation — must occur today.

The Spirit of God moved in the first chapter of Genesis, effecting a beginning of the earth’s restoration. And the first thing recorded immediately following the Spirit’s movement was light shining out of the previously existing darkness, with a division being established between the light and the darkness (*cf.* Gen. 1:3, 4; John 1:5; II Cor. 4:6).

The Spirit of God, in like manner moves today, effecting a beginning of man’s restoration (the salvation of his spirit). And the first thing which God does for man is to cause light to shine out of the previously existing darkness, with a division being established between the light and the darkness (pertaining to a division between the spirit and the soul [Heb. 4:12], inseparably associated with a division between the new and old natures [Gal. 4:22-31; 5:16-23]).

Note Paul’s words in II Cor. 4:6; 5:17a:

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [‘creation’]...”

And Gen. 2:7, a subsequent type from a different perspective (life produced in that which was lifeless), is an account portraying additional details relating to the same truth. The Spirit of God — the *Neshamah* — wrought order out of chaos in Genesis chapter one; the Spirit of God — the *Neshamah* — produced life in Genesis chapter two; and the Spirit of God — the *Neshamah* — brings order out of chaos, producing life in unregenerate man today.

“Life” produced in unregenerate man has to do with a movement of the Spirit, connected with an impartation of breath (the *Neshamah*), based on the finished work of the Son at Calvary. This allows light to come into existence where only darkness had previously existed, producing a division between man’s redeemed spirit and his unredeemed soul.

Impartation of Life to the Saved

Once life has been generated, the life must then be continued and sustained. Life is *generated* through “breathing in” (initial work of the Spirit), *retained* through the “breath remaining” (indwelling work of the Spirit), and *sustained* through a “continued breathing in” (a continued work of the Spirit).

Sustenance for life, a “continued breathing in,” is what is involved in II Tim. 3:16. This verse, studied in the light of Gen. 2:7, is the key which will unlock the door concerning the *Neshamah* of God in relation to saved man, demonstrate the power of the Word of God, and reveal the reason Christians are commanded to “receive the implanted word.”

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3:16, 17, NIV).

“God-breathed” in II Tim. 3:16 is a translation of the compound Greek word *Theopneustos*, which

is simply the word for “God” (*Theos*) and the word for “breath,” or “Spirit” (*Pneuma*) added. Thus, the translation “God-breathed” is not only a very literal translation, but, in the light of Gen. 2:7, it is the best of all possible translations.

The “Word of God” is, thus, here identified with the *Neshamah* of God. The Word of God was given through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21), and is the element which the indwelling Holy Spirit uses to sustain the life which He Himself originally imparted and presently continues.

Thus, in a full Scriptural respect, the *Neshamah* of God can only refer to both *the Spirit* and *the Word*. “Life” emanates from both (II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 4:12; James 2:26), and the relationship existing between both prohibits any separation.

The Word of God, because of its very origin and nature — God-breathed — is *the only thing* which the Holy Spirit, Who gave the Word, can use to effect man’s spiritual growth toward maturity.

The *Neshamah* of God (the Holy Spirit), Who imparted life, uses the *Neshamah* of God (the living, implanted Word, which He moved men to pen) to sustain this life. And, through this sustenance, a person progressively becomes “wise unto salvation” (II Tim. 3:15).

And this continuing work of the Spirit is something seen in the remaining five days of God’s restorative work in Genesis chapter one.

God’s work on the first day relates to the impartation of life (the salvation of the spirit).

God’s work on the remaining five days relates to continuing and sustaining that life (growth unto maturity, the salvation of the soul).

And God’s work throughout all six days is with a view to the seventh day of rest (the Messianic Era).

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