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“THE BREATH OF GOD”

Job 37:10

“The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen.”

We have heard the term “Act of God” used in legal cases in a Court of Law. It is a term used to explain events outside of human control, such as sudden floods or other natural disasters, for which no one can be held responsible. The phrase, “Act of God” is sometimes used to attribute an event to divine intervention. Job attributes ice, or frost in some translations, to the breath of God. That is, the cold wind that results in ice is an “Act of God” – it is God blowing His breath.

The Hebrew word means “puff,” “wind” and “breath.” The Scriptures speak of *“the breath of God”* in several places. It is an interesting subject and one that is very informative as we study the person of God as revealed in human anatomical terms.

Every revelation of God to mankind should arrest our attention and capture our sanctified inquisitiveness. To know God better should be the desire of every one of His children. Paul set a good example for us when he said, *“That I may know him....”* (Philippians 3:10) May it be our passion while on earth to know Him better, whom we shall some day meet face to face.

I have been in many countries where the gods that are worshiped are man-made. *“Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.”* (Psalm 115:4-8)

The true and living God is said to have breath. He is alive! Do you know Him? Do you desire to know Him better? Then let us investigate the term *“The breath of God”* in Scripture.

The Creative Breath of God

Psalm 33:6 *“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.”*

God spoke the universe into existence. Eight times in Genesis chapter 1 we read the words, *“God said.”* Hebrews 11:3 informs us that *“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God.”* (nasb) The breath of God issuing in speech brought into existence the material universe.

The Life-Giving Breath of God.

Genesis 2:7 – *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”*

The nature of man consists of a material substance, dust, and an immaterial principle, 'The breath of life,' God's breath imparting life.

To this, Job bears witness in Job 33:4 when he said, *"The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."*

The Sea-Dividing Breath of God.

In the song of Moses, after the crossing of the Red Sea, he attributes the dried-up waters and the path through the sea to God blowing His breath upon the waters. He wrote:

"In the greatness of your majesty You threw down those who opposed You. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood up like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea." (Exodus 15:7-8)

The Scripture-Producing Breath of God.

II Timothy 3:16-17 – *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

The words, *"by inspiration of God"* is the translation from the Greek language into English. In the Greek this phrase is one word, *"theopneustos."* This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, God-inspired. It is from *"theos,"* the Greek word for God, and *"pneō,"* the Greek word meaning "to breathe, to breathe out."

The Word of God is therefore said to be inspired by God, or breathed by him. The Scriptures are the breath of God, the Word of God, not men, congealed upon the pages as holy writing.

The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture has been a subject of much discussion, and even controversy, among Christians. There are several views on the subject:

1. The Bible writers were inspired only in the sense that a poet or writer is inspired naturally. In other words, the spark of divine inspiration that supposedly is in all humans simply burned a little brighter in the hearts of the Bible writers. This is called the Natural Theory.

2. That every thought and word was inspired by God, and that the writer did nothing but merely write as the Spirit dictated. This theory holds that God dictated the Bible to his writers as an office manager would dictate an impersonal letter to his secretary. This is called the Dictation Theory of inspiration.

James I. Packer explains as follows:

"Because Evangelicals hold that the biblical writers were completely controlled by the Holy Spirit, it is often supposed. . . That they maintain what is called the "dictation" or "typewriter" theory of inspiration. . . . But it is not so. This "dictation theory" is a man of straw. It is safe to say that no Protestant theologian, from the reformation till now, has ever held it; and certainly modern evangelicals do not hold it. . . . it is true that many sixteenth and seventeenth-century theologians spoke of Scripture as "dictated by the holy ghost." But all they meant was that the

authors wrote word for word what God intended. . . . The use of the term "dictation" was always figurative. . . the proof of this lies in the fact that, when these theologians addressed themselves to the question, what was the spirit's mode of operating in the writers' minds? They all gave their answer in terms not of dictation, but of accommodation, and rightly maintained that God completely adapted his inspiring activity to the cast of mind, outlook, temperament, interests, literary habits, and stylistic idio-syncrasies of each writer."

3. That God gave the whole matter, leaving the inspired writers to their own language; and hence the great variety of style and different modes of expression. This is called The Dynamic Theory.

However, 2 Peter 1:20 says, *"No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*

4. The Verbal-Plenary-Inerrant theory: All (plenary) the very words (verbal) of the Bible are without error (inerrant) and are inspired by God.

Matthew 4:4 says, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."*

First Corinthians 2:13 says, *"These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."*

Jesus says in John 17:8, *"For I have given them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me."*

Jesus says in John 6:63, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."*

Verbal-plenary inspiration did not overwhelm the personality of the human author. The Bible writers always retained their physical, mental, and emotional powers.

That the Bible claims to be inspired by God is beyond doubt. The Bible that we have is the Word of God!

The Holy Spirit-Bestowing Breath of God.

John 20:21-22 – *"So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

The Greek word for "spirit" is *pneuma*, which means "breath." The word rendered "spirit" in the Scriptures is used to denote wind, air, breath, as well as Spirit. The operations of the Holy Spirit are compared to the wind in John 3:8 and Acts 2:2.

Acts 1:4 records: *“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

Acts 2:1-4 *“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house*

where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”

As God, in the physical creation, breathed into Adam the breath of life, Jesus now breathed upon the disciples. This breathing on them was a symbol and a pledge of Him Whom they were to receive on the day of Pentecost.

Spirit “ual” – spiritual life, is the Holy Spirit’s life within us. The Spirit of God is like our breath. We are seldom aware of our breathing. It is so essential for life that we only think about it when something is wrong with it. God’s Spirit is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. We might not often be aware of Him, but without Him we cannot live a “spiritual life.” It is the Holy Spirit who is the life within us that death cannot destroy.

The Judgmental Breath of God.

In David’s song, in II Samuel 16, he is praising God for the defeat of his enemies. He says, *“Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered, at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils.”* II Samuel 22:16)

These words are repeated in Psalm 18:15. This is David’s description and explanation of God’s judgment upon his enemies. Remember that psalms are Hebrew poetry. Poetic license is a term we use for latitude given to the poet to describe in atypical terms persons, places, things and/or events. The dictionary says:

“It is the license used by a writer or artist to heighten the effect of their work; it is poetic liberty for the sake of rhyme, metre, or an overall enhancement of effect; liberty taken by a poet of departing from normal order, diction, rhyme, or pronunciation. An example of poetic license is the way in which stylized images of an object are different from their real life counterparts, but are still intended to be interpreted by the viewer as representing the same thing.”

Job also speaks of the breath of God in judgment: *“According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it. “By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of His anger they come to an end.”* (Job 4:8-9 nasb)

Conclusion

What are the lessons we can learn from the term *“breath of God”* in scripture? Principally there are three overriding lessons:

1) Jehovah is the only living, eternal God.

All man-made gods are incapable of breathing because they do not have life. The God of the Bible alone has life and is the source of life.

2) Only God can impart eternal life to mankind.

Spiritually lifeless persons can only create after their own likeness, therefore, their gods are lifeless.

3) Having received the blessings of the breath of God, we should use our breath to bless Him who has given us breath!

Therefore, *“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!”* (Psalm 150:6)

“Breathe on Me Breath of God”

“Breathe on me, breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Blend all my soul with Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.”