

**“ΕΜΦΥΣΑΩ” IN JOHN 20:22, AN EXEGETICAL  
STUDY**

By

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<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
SUMMARY	5
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ORIENTATION</b>	
1.1 The Problem	8
1.2 Purpose	9
1.3 Method	11
1.4 Structure	12
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A SURVEY OF THE BACKGROUND OF 'BREATHING'</b>	
2.1 Meaning of breathing	13
2.2 Breathing in Genesis	16
2.3 Breathing in Joshua	19
2.4 Breathing in Ezekiel	20
2.5 Comparison between Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37:9	22
2.5.1 The differences between Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37:9	23
2.6 Breathing in the Apocrypha	24
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ΕΜΦΥΣΑΩ IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CREATION</b>	
3.1 Creation Recreation motif in John	26
3.2 Pneumatology in John	34
3.3 A note on symbolism in John	36
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>ORIENTATION CONCERNING SOME ISSUES IN JOHN 20</b>	
4.1 The Apostles' Assurance and Jesus' sovereignty	39
4.2 Conditions for the giving of the Spirit	42
4.3 The Apostles' mission stated	44
4.4 John's presentation of Jesus	45

<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>EXEGETICAL ISSUES IN JOHN 20:22</b>	
5.1 Exegetical discussion of John 20:22	47
5.2 The effects of breathing on the disciples	57
5.3 The role of the Holy Spirit in John 20:22	58
5.4 Different exegetical views on John 20:22	61
5.5 The issue of Pentecost	66
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSION</b>	
6.1 In General	68
6.2 Application	71
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>73</b>



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## SUMMARY

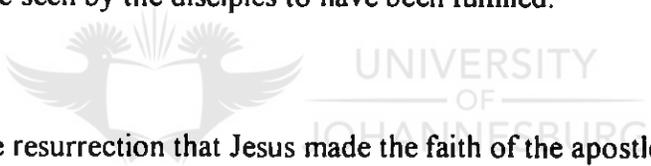
This is an exegetical study of the word 'breathed' or 'εμφυσῶ' in John 20:22. Firstly it looks at the background of this word in the Septuagint and the Apocrypha. In the Septuagint a study is made of the meaning of the word in the various books in which it occurs. Circumstances surrounding the use of this word and the context under which it is used are taken into consideration in an attempt to get an accurate meaning. A note is also made on the use of this word as explained by different scholars.

In this study I also examine the possibility of a relationship between this word and creation. Reference is made to the creation in Genesis and creation in Ezekiel. Because of the different circumstances that exist between these two books, a note on such differences is given. The idea that the book of John has a creation motif is also investigated. I try first of all to look at the way the author of the fourth gospel develops his creation motif from the beginning of his gospel. This is carried through the whole book of John during the Lord's earthly ministry and extending to the period after His resurrection which culminates in the action of John 20:22.

John comes through as someone who presents Christ as the Creator of both the new and the old creation. This idea is investigated and researched to find the connection between the old creation and the new creation. John seems to see a new creation emerging with Jesus' arrival in this world. This starts immediately as Jesus establishes this new creation Himself while He is still in the world. We observe that He does this through the means of the signs that He performs.

The signs that Jesus performs point to the future works of God. Jesus' work of creating a new nation for Himself culminates in the new creation He makes in His disciples who are to ensure that this new creation continues to be made even in the absence of Jesus Himself.

This thesis also takes an interest in the relationship that existed between Jesus and the disciples after His resurrection. This relationship is examined more closely for it seems to receive a detailed account by the author of the fourth gospel. The appearance of Jesus to His disciples on various occasions is of great significance to this research. We notice that it was during these appearances that the work of recreation was done. The 'big' message is given to the disciples during this period. It was then that the fulfilment of the Scriptures were seen by the disciples to have been fulfilled.

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It was after the resurrection that Jesus made the faith of the apostles more meaningful. The discouragement that had befallen the disciples is dealt with immediately after resurrection. Jesus is seen by the disciples as their living Lord, the One who was dead but now alive. Their hope is renewed and their faith restored. This leads to recreated beings in the midst of discouragement and a hostile community.

Jesus states the disciples mission again to them after His resurrection. They were now ready to proceed with the great commission that Jesus Himself came to fulfil in this world. The elevation to which Jesus raised them was of the same magnitude as He was elevated by the Father.

Jesus' action of giving the Spirit to the disciples is a demonstration to them and us that

these recreated beings were not to do the work by their own human ability. They were to emulate Jesus who did everything in the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the breathing on the disciples was the actual empowering on them, for the purposes of the fulfilment of the task.

In this thesis we also look at the various views that are given by different scholars. Some hold to the view that the Lord's breathing was symbolical of what was to happen in the future. Others hold to the view that this was a partial giving of the Spirit and the real bestowal was to be at Pentecost. Still others view the 'breathing' of Jesus on the disciples as a complete action in its own right and that this was meant for a specific reason for that specific situation. I subscribe to this view and believe that the Lord's breathing on the disciples was meant for a specific reason and is not to be a norm for all times.



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# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION

### ***1.1 THE PROBLEM:***

The big problem that we are faced with is that this phrase: “And with that he breathed on them...”, only appears in the gospel of John, and here only. The saying that Scripture interprets Scripture cannot hold water in this passage. The other three gospels have no parallels to this phrase or word. John has used it and it is therefore relevant to the teaching of the New Testament. As this is a hapax legomenon, it warrants a detailed investigation.

Within the book of John itself, there is no passage that explains it nor makes a comment nor even a reference to this occurrence. The phrase or word seems to appear as an isolated incident. This raises questions like: Why does this only happen after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus? Why did Jesus not do this during His ministry period with His disciples? Why do the synoptics not mention this in their narration of the good news? Answers to these questions would help clear the mist.

In many instances passages in the New Testament are normally related to Old Testament passages, either in the form of a prophecy that is fulfilled or as a historical reference. But this passage in John 20:22 does not have any such links with the Old Testament. There is no known link with the Old Testament whether by prophecy or historical reference that would support John’s case here. Does this mean that John formulated this phrase for his own purposes?

This word “εμφυσᾶω” does however occur in the Septuagint, in the Old Testament. These occurrences though, are found in different contexts to that of John. We are still without a passage to which we can directly draw a parallel and thereby gain insight into our passage in John 20:22. John 20:22 seems to be standing alone in the wilderness. But is it really standing alone? What is its significance in the understanding of the gospel of John?

## ***1.2 PURPOSE***

The purpose of this study is to find out if there could be any relationship between John 20:22 and the Old Testament. The possibility that the word “εμφυσᾶω” occurs in the Septuagint in the context of a creation or recreation motif shall be investigated. This study shall seek to discern this creation-recreation motif and to find any connection that might exist between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and any related significant literature. Also, this research shall seek to carefully study the meaning of the word “εμφυσᾶω” in the known occurrences. On the basis of the findings of this study, it is hoped that parallels shall be drawn between John 20:22 and the Old Testament passages that shall have been chosen and studied.

A study of the book of John shows the distinct contrast the author uses throughout this gospel between the first creation in Adam and the second creation in Christ. It is clear that John takes a different approach from the synoptic gospels to the ministry of Christ and its significance to the human race. John talks about being born from above and having passed from death to life through Jesus Christ. In his epistles, John points to the eternal life that is found in Jesus Christ. This common approach between the gospel and the epistles leaves us with the desire to investigate the relationship between this life and

the action of our Lord Jesus on His disciples. The writer contends that John 20:22 fits into the macro structure and purpose of John. This research further seeks to find out how John 20:22 fits into the purpose for which John wrote the gospel. John repeatedly focuses on the fact that life is to be found in Jesus Christ. This study shall seek to establish if this is true in the passage under consideration.

It is this writer's aim that at the end of this study, an in-depth understanding of the meaning of "εμφυσᾶω" within the context of John 20:22 shall have been gained. Such an understanding should be gained by comparing the usage of this same word in the Septuagint and other related literature. It is hoped that such an understanding will help towards an informed interpretation of the whole verse. This will probably lead to a better understanding of pneumatology in John. This research will hopefully give an answer to the question whether the action of our Lord Jesus in this verse signifies a proleptic perspective to Pentecost or whether it is related to Pentecost or the great commission.

Another purpose of this research is that, at the end, it should enable us to compare the status of the disciples before and after the "ενεφυσησεν" of John 20:22. It shall also seek to know whether this action was restricted to the eleven disciples or whether it also involved the other disciples of Jesus. If Christ only intended the giving of the Holy Spirit to the core group, it would therefore have had a special meaning to them and to Christ Himself. This research hopes to be able to shed light on the significance of the Lord's action here, and what it was to mean to the church later.

### **1.3 METHOD**

This research will not be limited to a single method of study, but it shall adopt an eclectic approach. The nature of the passage under study is such that a wider scope of sources shall be to the advantage of this research. Ideas from different sources should lead to a better conclusion. A single method approach may lead to a short-sighted interpretation of John 20:22. The method shall primarily be lexical, semantic and exegetical.

A proper understanding of the style and language used shall play an important role in this research. Words may carry and convey different messages in different contexts and different cultural settings. Sentence constructions also play a significant role in the understanding of the message being conveyed.

This research shall also be open to historical considerations. This approach should help acquire as much understanding as possible. Different historical usages or interpretations lead to a better or informed conclusion. By allowing history to have an input in the study, it should help to discover whether there have been any changes in the meaning of the word or not. Other literature which may not necessarily be Christian, shall also be allowed to have a voice in this study. The true meaning of a word will always hold water even when used by people who adhere to different faiths. Such literature may come from different levels, e.g. academic or informal. The usage of the word “εμφυσάω” by literature should hopefully shed light on the true meaning of this word. Exegesis based on a wide scope of ideas or variations should yield an accurate meaning of the word or phrase. Exegesis shall be of great significance in this research and shall form its foundation.

## ***1.4 STRUCTURE***

Chapter 2: The hapaxlegomenon: This chapter will deal with the grammatical background of “εμφυσῶ” in the Septuagint and other related literature. It shall also deal with Old Testament occurrences of this word as used in the Septuagint. It is from this background that an attempt shall be made to link the meaning of this hapaxlegomenon in John 20:22 and the general usage of it in other contexts.

Chapter 3: This chapter shall deal with the creation motif in the book of John. An attempt shall be made to see how John brings out the idea of creation in his writings. We shall consider other Johannine writings beyond the gospel.

Chapter 4: Here we shall take a survey of John 20, based on the previous discoveries on the creation motif. It is here where we shall look at Jesus, His resurrection, His mission and the giving of the Spirit.

Chapter 5: In this chapter we shall concentrate on the exegetical issues of John 20:22. We shall seek a deeper understanding of the act of breathing on the disciples by the Lord. It is here where a comparison of the different views by different authors shall be made.

Chapter 6: This chapter shall deal with the theological conclusion. The findings of the previous chapters shall be used to formulate a viewpoint of the writer. We shall also try here to find or suggest a possible application of the verse to today's church.

The Greek used in this work is without accent.

In the next chapter we shall take a survey of the background of “breathing”. Let us now do so.

## CHAPTER 2

### A SURVEY OF THE BACKGROUND OF “BREATHING” (ΕΜΦΥΣΑΩ).

#### 2.1 MEANING OF BREATHING

In this chapter we are going to look at the possible meaning of this scarce word “εμφυσαω”. The fact that it appears only in the gospel of John; and not in the synoptics; calls for a closer look at the reason surrounding this appearance.

JOHN 20:22 says: “and with that he breathed and said ‘Receive the Holy spirit’”. ( και τουτο ειπων ενεφυσησεν και λεγει αυτα λαβετε πνευμα αγιον ). Since this phrase has no parallels anywhere else in the New Testament; we shall attempt to use other literature to try and get a clearer understanding of its usage as well as its meaning.

A careful look at the word “εμφυσαω” in the Old Testament shows that it is used in several ways. According to Alders, one of the ways it is used is to “describe the audible or visible effects of breathing”.(Alders 1981:85). Alders cites Daniel 10:17 where the author says: “my strength is gone and I can hardly breath”. This can be understood to refer to some visible effects of breathing because breathing requires strength in order for it to occur. When breathing occurs it can therefore be observed and signs of this process can be seen. The effects of breathing cannot be hidden; they are visible and audible. In a broader sense then; the use of this word indicates the presence of life. The word is never used where the subject under discussion is a dead body.

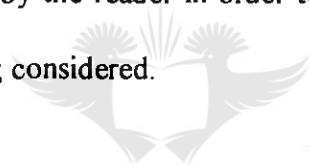
According to Daniel 10:17 breathing is therefore related to strength. Its intensity and presence or absence; is an indication of the measure of strength or life in that organism; strength is related to life.

Kittel has this to say about this word: “according to the LXX; God blows His living breath into man or upon him by his pneuma. The breath of God awakens life in all creation; and when it blows over the place of the dead bones rise up to new life”(Kittel.1964:251).

This explanation suggests that God’s breathing is different from other forms of breathing (which are breathing by created beings). When he says that the breath of God awakens life in all creation; he gives us the understanding that whenever God’s breathing takes place; it will always result in life being imparted to that which is the object of this breathing. This further suggests that God’s breathing is always purposeful.

Brown links breathing to creation(Brown 1975:376). This he does by comparing the appearance of this word in the LXX. He sees God’s breathing as declaring the independence of God’s providence from the absolute beginning which He himself set and from history. This independence enables him to break into history in his loving purpose and to bring the cause of history to its completion. This is an important definition to us. It portrays God as being so in charge of his creation that He can do anything with it at any time. According to Brown’s explanation; God has full control over the life of every living being ; for it is He who gives such life through his breathing. Withholding his breath is similar to withholding life.

Louw and Nida have this to say concerning breathing: "...the process of breathing on someone may have very important symbolic implications. In some instances this can be related to a blessing... but in some languages the act of breathing on a person almost inevitably suggests some harmful influence; often connected with the use of black magic".(Louw and Nida 1988:274). According to Louw and Nida then; breathing can be used in different contexts. Based on the context in which it is used; the meaning may be positive or negative; i.e. a blessing or a curse. Consequently; the reader must clearly understand the context within which the word is being used in order to give an accurate interpretation of the same. We also need to take note of the fact that Louw and Nida speak of symbolic implications. This further suggests that the process of breathing may in itself carry only a symbolic meaning instead of reality. Again this calls for the right interpretation by the reader in order to determine whether a symbol is being implied or reality is being considered.



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Thayer explains  $\epsilon\mu\phi\upsilon\sigma\alpha\omega$  as breathing on something or someone. He claims that this is the manner of the Hebrew prophets used to engage in; as a means of communicating something to someone. He sees the same to be true with Jesus who would have used it to communicate the Holy Spirit (Thayer 1901:123).

Sophocles says that this word means to breath into someone or something with reference to those to be baptised (Sophocles 1975:214). This is an interesting definition because it goes beyond the giving of meaning and gives also the status or expected status of those who are being breathed into. Sophocles' definition therefore advocates for breathing to be a preparatory act for something to follow afterwards. In his words; it is baptism. It will be interesting to find out later in this study how this can be linked to our present

passage under study. This definition raises questions such as : Can someone be breathed into without baptismal to follow afterwards? What kind of baptismal is this? Is this baptism done by the one who does the breathing or by someone else? Answers to such questions would help give even a better understanding of this word.

Liddell and Scott (1985:116) interpret *εμφυσῶ* as a process of ‘blowing in’. This is more of a general statement than the previous two by Thayer and Sophocles. Thayer and Sophocles’ definitions suggest an element of life whereas that of Liddell and Scott makes no reference to life in any form.

## **2.2 ‘BREATHING’ IN GENESIS**

In Genesis 2:7 it is recorded that the Lord breathed “the breath of life” into the man’s nostrils. Man had already been formed but he did not have any visible or audible effects of life in him. Having been formed by God did not in itself result in life being automatically found in man. Man was still incomplete, he lacked something. The giving of life was a separate process from that of the formation of man. Though the structure was there, complete and good looking, it lacked life. God had to create life in man or He had to give life to man in order to bring His work of creation to completion. It was at this stage that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”. God did not get life from somewhere to give to man, but being life Himself, He gave His life to man by breathing into man. Without the breath of God, man was not a living being.

The Greek word used here is “*ενεφυσησεν*”. The verb “*εμφυσῶ*” from which it is derived means “to breath into” or “to breath”. This is a verb in the indicative mood and in the aorist tense. This tells us that God took an active part in the process of creating life

in man. This was a process that only He could bring about. God was the only source of this life for He is Himself life. By His breathing, “ενεφυσησεν”, God was giving life to man. The act of breathing was one of uniting Himself with man, and because He Himself is life, the lifeless formed man became a living being. From that moment, man could be seen to be alive and even heard to be alive. God’s “ενεφυσησεν εις το προσωπον αυτου” (...breathed into his nostrils...) (Gen 2:7), was a life-giving act to Adam. After this act Adam came out of his previous state of lifelessness. God’s breathing brought an immediate and visible change. It created in him what was not there before. This ‘new thing’ came with power, generating something out of nothing. It was the beginning of a new relationship between God and man, a relationship that depended only on God as the giver and man as the recipient.

It is worth noting that even though God had formed man from the dust of the ground, it was still necessary for the direct creative power of God to create or generate life in man. It was only after this had been done that “man became a living being”. Different scholars may interpret this phrase differently, but we need to note that the giving of life to man took a special act of God’s creative power to do it. It further indicates to us that human life stands on a far higher platform than animal life. Only man was breathed into. The uniqueness of human life represents the uniqueness of its Creator. Human life therefore represents and is the work of the Giver of life, God Almighty.

When God “ενεφυσησεν” into man He was actually giving man that which man did not possess up to that point. It is the God-breathed life in man that distinguishes man from all other forms of life. This is that part of man that enables him to enter into a relationship with God. We see here God’s combination of the low part, namely, dust, and the high

part, namely, Spirit, to form and create a living being. This is a demonstration of God's ability to take the worthless and turn it into something worthwhile - the dust of earth becoming God's glory and God's image. Man therefore has a special place and a unique role to play in God's creation because of the special way in which he was created and became alive.

It is God's "ενεφυσησεν" that enabled Adam "to comprehend morality and...to enter God so as to enjoy Him and glorify Him forever" (Stigers 1976:66). Stigers also argues that the use of the word "εμφυσω" is to "emphasize the presence of life through the most visible symbol to man - breathing, the absence of which signifies death" (Stigers 1976:66). In the book of Genesis, God is using a language that is simple enough for man to understand the supernatural act that God performed in bestowing the highest gift by the personal God. Only God Himself could energize the lifeless man.

In the case of Genesis 2:7, God was pronouncing a blessing on man by His "ενεφυσησεν εις το προσωπον αυτου" (LXX). This blessing was transplanted into reality as Adam became a living being. Whether this was an instantaneous occurrence or whether it took place after a certain time interval, the Bible does not say. What is of significance to us though is that the act was a blessing which was realized. Our knowledge of God through His personal revelation to man, leads us to conclude that the life intended for Adam was received by him instantaneously. We can further conclude that God's "εμφυσω" in Gen. 2:7 brought a blessing of life not only to the first man, but to the whole human race.

### 2.3 *'BREATHING' IN JOSHUA*

In Joshua 10:40 it is said that Joshua totally destroyed all who breathed. This refers to all living beings. Job testifies to this when he says: "As long as I have life within me, the breath of God is in my nostrils" (Job 27:3). This verse can be understood to mean that the life that the author has is given to him by the breath of God, or it is the breath of God, it originates from God. This is proof that, "God gave man breath and thereby gave him life" (Alders 1981:85).

From the above reasoning, we can conclude that the breath of God is itself life. The giving of His breath to man therefore means the direct giving of life to man, hence the use of the phrase "breath of life". By this we can then understand the usage of this phrase elsewhere in the Old Testament to be within this scope of meaning. In Joshua 10:40, we are told that Joshua "left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed."

The Greek word that has been translated into "breathed" here is "εμπνεον" which is derived from the verb "εμπνεω" which means "to breath" or "to inhale". Here again the idea that is being conveyed to the reader is that Joshua destroyed life which was in the form of living beings. During biblical times the phrase "all who breathed" was a familiar saying that was to be understood to mean living human beings. Such would only be classified as dead or destroyed when the visible effects of that breath or life ceased to be manifested. The visible effects of breath or life are for example, movement, while the audible effects of the same can be speech. Where life or breath has ceased to exist, these effects (movement and speech) also disappear.

## 2.4 'BREATHING' IN EZEKIEL

The idea of “εμφυσῶ” as the means of bringing life where there is no life is also contained in Ezekiel 37:9. Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy to the breath to come “and ‘breathe’ (εμφυσηδον) into the slain, that they may live”.

This verse makes it clear that the objects or subjects under consideration of breathing had no life in them because they were slain. The purpose of the breathing was to bring life back into the dead bodies or bones. “The bodies were complete but still prostrate: the final act of power needed to make them live and rise” (Cooke 1967:399). What Cook is arguing here or what he means rather, is that the “ruah” of life which comes ultimately from God was to be responsible to make them live and rise.

Eichrodt puts it differently and he says: “The decisiveness of this moment is brought out by a fresh command to the prophet to proclaim it...to summon the Spirit of life...to come in its full power to flood the lifeless bodies”.(Eichrodt 1970:508). By breathing into them, the slain bodies would be awakened into life. Here the “ruah” is perceived as having the ability to pervade a body and communicate life to it at God’s command.

It is in the act of “εμφυσηδον” that the life is imparted into the lifeless body. Again here the verb is in the indicative-active mood. The “ruah” would have to take an active part in the life-giving process. God actually says in Ezekiel 37:5, “I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life”. It is clear from this statement that the breath would not just be blown on the bodies, but it had to literally “enter” into them, in order to bring life back. Again we are left without a shadow of a doubt that this could only happen at God’s command, for it is only He who has control over life.

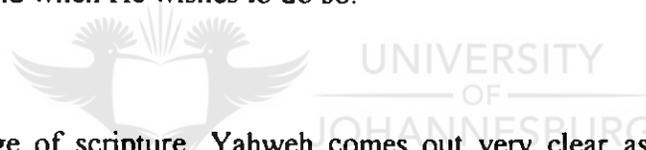
Eichrodt sees this as “going back to an ancient Israelite nation according to which the mystery of natural life is comprised in spirit and the created world is assured of being kept alive by the ever-renewed pouring out of this breath of life from God, whereas death and corruption seize upon it whenever God withholds His Spirit from it” (Eichrodt 1970:509). This statement is in agreement with biblical passages like Psalm 104:29&30 and Genesis 6:3 which say: “when you hide your face they are terrified; when you take away their breath they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit they are created...” and “Then the Lord said: ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal, his days will be a hundred and twenty years’”, respectively.

The phrase: “When you send your Spirit they are created”, helps us to understand that real or true life is created by God, for His Spirit is the same as His breath, at least in this context. Ezekiel’s record here teaches that God’s Spirit, which we understand to be the same as His breath, is the creator of life. The presence or absence of the Spirit signifies the presence or absence of life. But it is worth noting that the Spirit does not only give life but *creates* life. There were times in Ezekiel’s life when he went through difficulties. We can assume that it is the same “πνευμα” who kept Ezekiel going and raised him to his feet, who would now bring life into these dead bodies through the word of Ezekiel’s mouth and God’s command. It was divine activity which enabled Ezekiel to carry out his functions and it was going to be divine activity which would bring back life into the lifeless bodies in the presence of Ezekiel.

Here again in Ezekiel, like in Genesis, God is Himself bringing back or creating life in the lifeless bodies through “breathing into” them. The dead bodies have to be activated or indwelt by the Spirit of God in order for them to be recreated. They once had life, but

because the breath of God had left them they died. These bodies had lost their life because God took away His breath from them. God's breath is equivalent to life. Now God wants life to return to them, and He says that His breath should be summoned to re-enter them.

We see here the Creator demonstrating His sovereignty over His creation as he simply gives a command and His command is obeyed. This command or prophesy was fulfilled in Ezekiel 37:10 when the breath entered the dead bodies and they came to life again. The phrase “και εμψυσηδον εις τους νεκρους τουτους” is one that addresses a specific situation. Here we see God dealing with lifeless bodies, “νεκρους τουτους”. Having full control over life, God demonstrates His sovereignty here in that He can give and take away life as and when He wishes to do so.



In this passage of scripture, Yahweh comes out very clear as the owner of life. He created the life, took it away, and now He re-created it, all only through His breath. Yahweh has full control over His creation and this creation fully obeys His instructions.

## **2.5 COMPARISON BETWEEN GENESIS 2:7 AND EZEKIEL 37:9**

On examining these two passages, Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37:9, we notice that they are two different scenarios with one common element. The common element is the act of *breathing into* a lifeless body. In Genesis 2:7, life is created for the first time. God created life when He “ενεψυσησεν” (breathed) into the newly formed body, and through this act, this body which had never been alive before became a living being. But in Ezekiel 37:9, the bodies in question once had life in them, but were now dead. God wanted life to be recreated in them. Now, God uses the same method He used to create

new life in Genesis to recreate life that had been lost in Ezekiel.

In both cases there was a need for the lifeless bodies to come into contact with the breath of God in order for life to be imparted to them. It took the life-giving breath of God to enter and re-enter the lifeless bodies in order to create and recreate life. It therefore follows that if God takes away His breath from man He has effectively taken away life from him (Psalm 104:29).

#### 2.5.1 *DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENESIS 2:7 AND EZEKIEL 37:9*

These two passages show very clearly that God is the source of life. He is not only the source of life but He has full control over it. Life emanates from God. His breathing gave life to the first man Adam, i.e. it created life when He so willed. He is therefore Creator of life even through His 'breathing'. In Ezekiel, Yahweh is portrayed as One who recreates life. He gives life back to those who had lost it. It was given back in the same manner as it was given for the first time, which was through breathing.

But what is of significance here is that this only happens to humans, and not just creation in general. This gives us the understanding that this is a special method that Yahweh uses to communicate His special gift to man. It is also important to notice that it is Yahweh Himself who does the recreating, Ezekiel is only His chosen tool in His hand. We therefore see Yahweh as both Creator and Recreator of life, through His breathing into man.

## 2.6 'BREATHING' IN THE APOCRYPHA

The Apocrypha also recognise the fact that life has to be breathed into man in order for him to become a living being. In The Wisdom of Solomon 15:11, we find these words: “because he did not recognise by whom he himself was moulded, or who it was that inspired him with an active soul and breathed into him the breath of life”.(Clarke 1973:193). The Greek language renders this latter part of the verse: “και εμψυθησαντα πνευμα ζωτικον”.

The writer of this book brings across the idea of breathing into someone as a method of giving life to them. Here also, it is the supernatural “breathing into” a body by the one who moulded it in order to make it a worthwhile product. We can easily conclude, even though not mentioned in the text, that the moulder is someone who has in himself the ability to give life. The author of this book sees the life given to man as a loan that must be repaid (v.8).

The similar arguments in the Old Testament passages and the Apocryphal passage we looked at above, lead us to the conclusion that there is some supernatural power needed in the creation of life. The life of man, however, takes a special form and the highest rank in all creation in that it directly represents its Creator. It is the Creator who personally imparts the breath of life into man.

From all the above observations, it can be concluded that the word “εμψυσω” carries and has the creation-recreation motif in all the passages looked at. Even though it is the same word, when used under different contexts it carries different meanings. The element of life is found in all the different contexts.

Having looked at the background of this hapaxlegomenon, we shall now sketch a framework around the creation-recreation motif in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 3

### ΕΜΦΥΣΑΩ IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CREATION

What is of significance in this chapter is the creation motif that runs through the book of John. We are going to look at this as a subject that is unique to this gospel. Here follows the discussion of this creation motif. The theme of creation-recreation appears to run through the book of John. This shall now be discussed at some length, as we shall be touching on the use of symbolism in John, which is a related subsection to our later discussion. We shall also say something about the pneuma in the gospel of John.

#### 3.1 CREATION-RECREATION MOTIF IN JOHN

The book of John begins with the words: “In the beginning was the Word...” (John 1:1). The book of Genesis starts with similar words saying: “In the beginning God created...”. Genesis is known as the book of beginnings. This book shows God as the creator of all that has been created. He created everything including man. John begins his recording in the exact similar fashion as does the book of Genesis. He presents the Word as the Creator of all things. If it is accepted that the Word is Jesus we therefore understand that Jesus is the Creator. This is taken from John 1:3 which says: “Through Him all things were made...” Jesus is therefore the agent of creation.

According to John’s explanation, the creator in Genesis is the same as the creator in John. It is clear that Christ was indeed with the Father in the beginning before everything was created. John therefore presents Christ as the Creator of the New Testament.

“Creation is thus God’s idea...”(Voortman 1998:18). Only God creates.

According to John 3:3, Jesus' words to Nicodemus point us to a need for recreation of the individual in order to see the kingdom of God. John 3:3 seems to carry that deep-seated message that man has need for recreation without which he cannot see the kingdom of God. The fact that man needs to be born from above indicates the inadequacy of his birth from below. Jesus taught that flesh alone is insufficient to do the will of the Father, for it has no dealings with the things of the Spirit. The Spirit needs to be part of man in order for man to be alive.

Nicodemus' puzzle is from his lack of understanding of the meaning of 'to be born from above' or 'to be born again'. To him, being born again was literal. Jesus was seemingly not dealing with the issue of being born for the second time physically, but was dealing with the issue of recreation. He wanted Nicodemus to realize he needed to be a different person. This was possible through recreation - 'to be born from above'. This calls for God's power . “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, the starry host by the breath of His mouth...” (Psalm 33:6). “The method of creation was as clear as its source: It was God who created and He did it by His word” (Kaiser 1978 :73 in Voortman 1998:17). The recreation in Nicodemus was to be the work of God Himself.

According to Voortman, “The new creation was actually a promise of the future glory of God. It was an expression of God creating something brand new” (Voortman 1998:24). He also says that creation is the unique work of God and an act of faith. Since man was the climax of creation in Genesis, he was to be the climax of the new creation in John (and the whole New Testament). The recreation of John 3:3 was necessitated by the

sinfulness of man and was brought about through Christ. Being born from above, meant new life in Christ. This is confirmed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says, "...If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...". This new creation is by virtue of being in contact with the Spirit of God. It "invites us to see the individual participating in a much greater eschatological reality". (Voortman 1998:26).

Again in John 10:10, Jesus declares that He is the One who gives life to men and that this was His purpose for coming into the world. Jesus came to recreate that which was created through Him in the beginning. Jesus, who is the Son of God, is Himself life, which He offers man to have abundantly. Life is one of the great concepts of the gospel of John. The term 'life' is found thirty-six times in this gospel and is not used by any of the other gospel writers like John does. John records Christ saying : "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish" (John 10:28), because He is 'the life'. This life motif runs through the book of John. But what needs to be realized is that Christ gives this life through recreating the individual through the Spirit. This, Christ does during the earthly life of the individual. The person passes from death to life here on earth.

John emphasises the fact that Jesus is the giver of life and that it is obtained through believing in Christ. John 20:31 serves as a good summary of the purpose of the writing of this gospel : "... that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name". In I John 1:2, John calls Jesus "The Life" who appeared and was seen by man. Christians are said to have passed from death to life because of the work of Christ in their lives. He says also in I John 5:12 : "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life". Again we see that John emphasises the life motif in 1John. We know that this life is obtained by no other

means but by being regenerated by God the Holy Spirit. It can therefore be concluded that John's motif of life in both the fourth gospel and IJohn is written or taught with the understanding that this life comes through the recreation of each individual who believes in the Son of God.

In the light of the discussion above, it is arguable that even after Jesus' resurrection, John still pursues this life motif - the creation- recreation motif. After Jesus' death on the cross, the disciples were in a dilemma. These men had become Jesus' disciples through His calling. They had left everything and followed Him. After having been with Jesus for a few years, they were left alone. John records that after Jesus had been crucified, they " were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews " (John 20:19). They were no longer the same men they were while Jesus was still with them.

They were overcome with fear, probably with a very dim view of their future. There was a great possibility of this group disintegrating. When their Master was arrested they all vanished in fear of the Jews. Their coming together was certainly because of their zeal to do the work to which they had been called, but they were under tremendous stress. According to the words of Excell, "each of them might have said 'We are all dead men' " (Excell 1904:411). Jesus appears to these men for the first time and finds them in this condition. The disciples were literally and spiritually demoralised or dead. The eleven disciples were the most vulnerable above all others. Their Tutor and Master in whom they had put their hope was no more.

Jesus, at the right time, entered the room where these men were. According to John 20:22, He came there as "the second Adam, the quickening Spirit, to breath into their

nostrils the breath of life to make His dead disciples living souls "(Excell 1904 : 411). By the "ενεφυσησεν,"our Lord places Himself on a level with Jehovah Elohim, with the Jehovah who possessed the fullness of *divinity*. "The same πνευμα ζωοποιου which...went forth from Jehovah Elohim, and produced in man the Divine image, proceeds here from Christ in order to reinstate the Divine image, first in the Apostles, and then in those who should believe, through their word".(Hengstenberg 1980 : 456).

This is again proof of the creative power of our Lord Jesus. He is indeed the Creator. What Jehovah Elohim did, He also does. He gives the disciples the new nature/creation they needed desperately at that time. Like His Father, He creates from nothing. In this case He creates by means of His breath.

When we examine the story of the wedding at Cana, we see the Lord Jesus changing ordinary water into wine. Is this not one of the miracles of His creative power? "Jesus the Creator, transforms the washing water of purification into the purest wine of celebration" (Voortman 1998:52). He does so from words alone. Smalley says : "The Cana sign is obviously symbolic in that it points to a spiritual meaning beyond itself" (Smalley 1985:176).

One outstanding passage that points to Jesus' creative power is John 9:6&7, which says: "...He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes...So the man went and washed, and came home seeing". Who is able to change mudballs into eyeballs except the Creator Himself? This man may not have had eyeballs at all - Jesus made them for him from mud. He may also have had eyeballs but which did not function. In either case, Jesus' action created sight for this man, for he had never

been able to see in his lifetime. Jesus created the uncreatable. According to Westcott, "...The light could not be eclipsed by the darkness".(Westcott 1958:5, in Voortman). Jesus in fact says in verse 39 that He came so that people may regain sight which He would create for them. This miracle clearly shows that indeed Jesus is the light of the world.

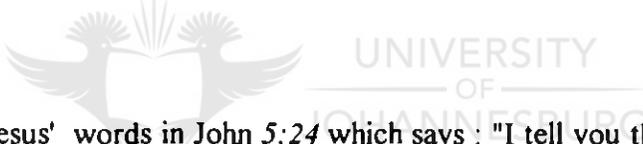
Voortman says: "John emphasizes in his Gospel that Jesus is the life...It is one of his characteristic concepts. He wishes to make it clear that the Creator has come that men may experience this new quality of life. John emphasizes that this gift of new life is open to all who would receive it. Men need natural life (*psyche*) to live in this life, but they need the supernatural life (*zoe*) for both this life and the life to come" (Voortman 1998:65)



"Just as at the first creation the Spirit 'brooded' over the primeval chaos, and finally brought order and harmony, so too the Spirit is active in the new creation (or spiritual rebirth). He would bring order, harmony and new vitality to the chaos of Nicodemus' personal life... the man was evidently suffering congenital blindness. Congenital blindness is due to the fact that there are either no eyeballs at all, or else the eyeballs were improperly formed...The implication is that Jesus fashioned new eyeballs out of clay and then restored his sight. This man, defectively formed in the first creation, is made perfect by the Son of God in the new creation." (Wiid 1982:63). After Jesus' mighty touch on this man, he became a new creation. That is the reason why some of those who knew him could not recognise him after his recreation - he looked different and he probably was different.

According to the above passage, Jesus is the creator of sight. He created it and gave it to the man who needed it. He is the same creator who says in John 10:10 that He has come so that His sheep may have abundant life - which He creates for them.

John further demonstrates the creative power of Jesus by the raising of Lazarus from death. This he does simply by speaking. He commanded Lazarus to rise and he did. His creative word gave life back to the dead man. Jesus used speech to bring back life to the royal official's son. In both instances, Jesus came out very clear as one who is able to give life. He actually creates it because it is not there, and more so that it is created out of nothing. Only God can do that. According to Harrington, the official's faith and actions "manifests his confidence that Jesus could heal at a distance by word alone" (Harrington 1990:41, in Voortman 1998:129).



John records Jesus' words in John 5:24 which says : "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned ; he has crossed over from death to life ". As already noted above, the apostles were 'dead' because of fear, and Jesus' concern was to help them cross over this bridge from death to enter into 'life'. Jesus' presence there was to put this into being. His pronouncement over them was an act of recreating them. Someone who crosses over from death to life is certainly being recreated ; and this was true of the apostles.

Jesus' appearance to the disciples was an act of reassuring them of His continued existence. He was not dead but alive. But they had to physically see Him in order to be convinced that He was alive. According to Voortman, creation is always with a purpose and plan. Voortman also sites the fact that creation is always and only from God or

Christ. God is "also the powerful one who initiates the new creation" (Voortman 1998:24). He also notes that what God creates is always brand new. This suggests that if the disciples were being recreated, they were being made brand new. Creation is accordingly the unique work of God for He makes something visible out of the invisible. Christ Himself is the symbol of creation hence anyone who is in Christ is a new creature.

This was a significant moment in the life of the church. Christ was actually recreating the life of the apostles who were spiritually dead. Their faith needed recreating. They needed conviction of the truth of their Lord's resurrection. Jesus' appearing to the disciples was "a great turning point in the life of the Apostles, and that with this crisis they would receive an advanced susceptibility, and a concurrent enlargement of the influence of the Spirit " (Hengstenberg 1980 : 456). Jesus was bringing His disciples back to faith in Himself as the risen Lord. They were being enabled to know Him not as the dead Christ, but as the living and risen Saviour. Hengstenberg actually puts it better when he says: "The essential factor was the resurrection and faith in Him who rose " (Hengstenberg 1980:457). Christ was indeed recreating their faith in Himself.

In this action, Christ was enabling His disciples to have renewed faith in Himself. This time not as one living among and with them, but as one who was crucified, died and now risen from the dead. They were being enabled to see Christ differently. It was this group, the nucleus of the church, that needed to be convinced of the fact that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, for they were the ones who would have to carry the message and spread it to the uttermost parts of the world. Had these men not been convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they would not have preached it. Also, if these men had not been given new strength by the Lord Himself, they would have remained in their state of

fear. It was only after the Lord had appeared to them that they regained their faith in Christ and even had courage to meet and study the scriptures with other disciples.

Acts 1:15,16 says "In those days Peter stood up among the believers ... and said 'Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David'" Here Peter was demonstrating new courage which he did not have before the Lord appeared to them and gave them new strength; Before this, Peter would not have had the courage to stand up and speak; let alone bear witness to the Scripture.

In John 20:19 the opposite of this action by Peter was true for this verse says ".... when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, indicating that Peter was full of fear for he was part of this group. Peter's action in Acts 1:15 is an indication that he was a different person, he had been recreated.



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### 3.2 *PNEUMATOLOGY IN JOHN*

The fourth evangelist handles the subject of the Holy Spirit in depth. He starts where the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism, and identifies the role played by the Holy Spirit there, and he says : " I would not have known Him, except the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain, is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit " (John 1:33).

John presents Jesus as the one who possesses the Holy Spirit and distributes the same. We would perhaps ask the question : Why did Jesus need the Holy Spirit in His ministry? Ladd answers this question better when he says : "The answer must lie in John's conviction of the full humanity of Jesus " (Ladd 1993:324) If Jesus, who is fully God, needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit because of His full participation in humanity

(except in its sinful nature), how much more does man need the Holy Spirit to empower him to accomplish the Lord's mission? Throughout the Bible, John portrays the Holy Spirit as a significant role player in the ministry of Jesus as well as that of His followers.

Jesus first introduces the Holy Spirit to us when He speaks to Nicodemus in John 3:3. There Christ says that unless a man is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God. Here Ladd sees John as integrating "the doctrine of the Spirit into his vertical dualism of the world of God above and the world of humans below John combines the vertical and the temporal by his reference to the Kingdom of God" (Ladd 1993:326). In this our first encounter with the Holy Spirit as introduced by Christ, we are left without any doubt that the Holy Spirit is the key to the kingdom of God. John 3:5 says: "I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of the Spirit".

John makes it clear to us that the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in the life of a Christian. Again in John 4:23,24, Christ says: "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit and His worshipers must worship in Spirit and in truth " Here John leads us to the understanding that true Christian worship is one that is mediated through our Lord Jesus Christ and inspired by God the Holy Spirit. We believe that "spirit" here refers to the Holy Spirit

John further points us to the role of the Spirit in the Christian life when he says: "The Spirit give's life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). This can be understood to mean that Jesus' words are the Spirit at work, producing life. Using Ladd's words we can say : "The point here is that

Jesus' death as a human being and a mere historical event has no saving power. It is only when His death is interpreted and apprehended by the Holy Spirit that it becomes a saving event" (Ladd 1993:328).

This further leads us to the understanding that the Holy Spirit has entered into human existence in the person of Jesus and made His flesh the way of salvation. This agrees with Jesus' words in John 3:6 when He said : "Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to spirit " This does not mean that the flesh is evil, what it does teach though is that the flesh is not able to perform according to the expectation of its Creator but needs and requires help from the Spirit to enable it to do that which pleases the Master.

From what has been said above we are therefore not surprised when the Lord Jesus Christ uttered these words to His disciples : "Receive the Holy Spirit ". This is in line with John's teaching of the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of those who have been born from above and moved from darkness into light. According to John's teaching therefore the Holy Spirit is an imperative in the practical outworking of the Christian life.

### ***3.3 A NOTE ON SYMBOLISM IN JOHN***

It is true that the book of John uses symbolism in some cases. In those cases, John's narration shows that the gospel is being interpreted against the background of Judaism. The narrator himself was an eyewitness of the events of Jesus' ministry.

About this symbolism, Painter says: "Two characteristics of Johannine symbolism have emerged.. Firstly, the symbols are Christologically oriented. The Johannine symbols replace the synoptic parables in the framework of the Gospel. A comparison of the relative functions of symbols and parables highlight this christological orientation. Jesus

is the Word, the light, the bread of life, the good shepherd, the vine. In the synoptics, parables sometimes exemplify Jesus' ministry. But there is no explicit identification of Jesus with characters in the parables as there are in the Johannine symbolism. Secondly, the symbols are always focal points of the conflict between Jesus and Judaism. In the symbol, what Judaism often applied to the law, or to Israel, is claimed for Jesus, but in a new way. Jesus, not the law, is the Word of God. But the Word is now understood as the unique Son of the Father. Jesus, not Israel, is the vine. But the vine is now distinguished from the branches"(Painter 1979:21,22).

John uses his symbolism to present the person of Jesus Christ in a meaningful way. According to Painter, "This presentation has presupposed the significance of the symbols only where the confrontation of Jewish Christians with Judaism is already critical." (Painter 1979:22). Indeed this argument is admissible because the symbols in John do not have any direct effect on the disciples as such.

We therefore find it difficult to justify the argument that John's use of symbolism applies even to passages such as the one we are considering in this research. No-one in daily life would expect a symbol to be used when someone gives them a task to perform. They would naturally expect either clear instructions of how to perform the task or to be given the equipment needed to do that job.

While we recognise the fact that John uses symbols in his presentation of Christ, his use of the phrase "He breathed," is not necessarily symbolical. John 7:39 is not good ground from which to argue against the fact contained in John 20:22, for by now Jesus 'glorification had already started - at His death and resurrection.

We have now seen the way John brings through the creation theme in his writings, let us now look specifically at chapter 20. We want to listen to John more closely now and hear what he says about Jesus in this chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

### *ORIENTATION CONCERNING SOME ISSUES IN JOHN 20*

#### *4.1 THE APOSTLES' ASSURANCE AND JESUS' SOVEREIGNTY*

John 20 forms part of the last section of the last "hour" of Jesus. This is part of the fulfilment of His ministry goal. This chapter can be called the resurrection narrative. It is in this chapter that Jesus' focus is on the disciples. During His earthly ministry, Jesus was seen by all the people, those who believed in Him as well as those who did not believe in Him, including His opponents. But after His resurrection, He was only seen by His disciples.

During His forty days on earth, after His resurrection He only appeared to His disciples. This seems to have been a calculated move by our Lord. It suggests to us that He chose to be with His disciples alone, possibly to deal with their need at that critical stage of their journey of faith. This was the time for the disciples to see scriptures being fulfilled. Indeed Jesus' resurrection was the fulfilment of the scriptures. "...the garments left in Jesus' tomb revealed to the disciples that Jesus had been raised to eternal life" (Brown 1990:197).

Discipleship seems to be the theme of chapter 20. This is also true with the previous two chapters. It is a chapter which shows the sovereignty and Lordship of Jesus. "The risen Jesus appears to His frightened disciples gathered behind locked doors who acknowledge Him to be the Lord and Good." (Mlakuzhyil 1987:234). It is in this chapter that the climax of the hour is reached. The Jesus who, a few days before was seen as a man of "sorrow" and "weakness", beaten and persecuted by the Jews, now appears as a victor

and has power over death. He shows Himself as someone who has power over nature and physical limitations. He comes into the room where the disciples are even though it is securely locked and goes out while it is still locked. He is positively identified by the disciples as the crucified Lord. This happened at least on two occasions. It is in this chapter that Jesus proves to His disciples that He is indeed alive. Lightfoot sees resurrection as "...a reversal of the passion..." (Lightfoot 1960:329).

The appearance of Jesus to the disciples was very significant because they were left alone, with fear and without hope and direction. The appearance was to be to them the foundation of their future ministry to their fellow Jews as well as the Gentiles. It was the disciples who were to be the witnesses that Jesus has been raised from the dead. The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ was to be based on His death and resurrection. It is here, in chapter 20 that Jesus proves Himself to be "the resurrection and the life" as He had previously claimed before His crucifixion. In this chapter Jesus takes the opportunity of giving all His disciples the first hand experience of the resurrected Messiah. After these appearances to the disciples, each one of them could confidently say: 'I have seen the risen Lord.'

The significance of the confidence of each disciple about the resurrection story was to be found in the purpose of the Gospel of John. This purpose is explicitly mentioned in chapter 20 verse 31: "But these were written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God..." This is a direct teaching about the Messiahship of Jesus.

Carson argues: "...the fundamental question the fourth Gospel addresses is not 'Who is Jesus?' but 'Who is the Messiah?' or 'Who is the Christ?'" (Carson 1991:90). According to

this view, the fourth Gospel seeks to prove to those who would not believe in Jesus, who the Messiah actually is and really is. There were no other people to prove this to the unbelievers except Jesus' followers or disciples. In order for these people to be able to prove to others that Jesus is the Messiah, they first had to be convinced themselves that He is indeed the One. Chapter 20 seeks to achieve this aim.

"The most likely people to ask that sort of question would be the Jews and the Jewish proselytes who know what 'the Christ' means..." (Carson 1991:90). Agreeing with Carson on the above statement, it was going to be a difficult task for the disciples to perform their duties because these were the very people who had orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus. They therefore needed extra proof themselves and extra strength to be able to stand their ground. It has therefore been argued that the Gospel of John aims in particular to evangelize the Jews and Jewish proselytes, the most difficult of the people of that day.

It is in chapter 20 that the disciples are being prepared for this gigantic task ahead of them after Jesus' departure from them. We can therefore argue that it prepares them for mission. I agree with Carson's statement that: "For John..., the resurrection of Jesus was the immutable fact upon which their faith was based; and their faith in large part depended on the testimony and transformed behaviour of those who had actually seen the resurrected Jesus." (Carson 1991:91).

In this chapter, Jesus is proving to His disciples that He is not a convicted criminal, but He is the resurrected Son of God, vindicated by God and therefore the Messiah He claimed to be before the crucifixion. This is stressed by Paul in 1 Cor.15:14-17. But

coupled with this view of resurrection is the view that Kysar holds which contends that Jesus' resurrection brought liberation to the disciples.

At Jesus' appearance they are still engulfed in their human emotions. Mary is still grief stricken, the disciples are in fear and Thomas in doubt. Christ appears to them in the midst of their condition and His appearance results in their condition being transformed. Mary goes on the mission tasked by the Lord, the disciples are filled with gladness and Thomas gains faith. John shows us here that the disciples have been 'liberated,' to use Kysar's language. At this stage Jesus is "drawn into this divine fellowship of love..." (Bruce 1983:14). Indeed Christ is here showing His love and concern for the disciples and His followers.

#### **4.2 *CONDITIONS FOR THE GIVING OF THE SPIRIT***

Lightfoot shows that the resurrection in John's Gospel is two pronged. First it shows a resumption of personal relations by the Lord. Secondly, it shows interaction with those who had followed Him during His earthly ministry. As these relations begin, the Lord immediately sends a very significant message to Mary and those who were to come after her, that interaction with Him will in future not depend on physical proximity but on a spiritual proximity.

Lightfoot argues that this idea is brought through by Jesus' refusal for Mary to touch Him or hold on to Him. This same author comes up with another argument that though Mary is prohibited to touch or hold on to Him, Thomas is allowed to do so later in the chapter in verse 27. If these two incidents are similar in nature, which I believe they are, then there must be a reason why Jesus refuses the one and allows the other to do the

same thing. Lightfoot draws a reasonable conclusion and says: "...the answer must be that it is because the Lord's ascent to the Father has meantime taken place..."(Lightfoot 1960:331).

The reason given by Jesus for forbidding the touch by Mary was: "I have not yet returned to the Father." But immediately Jesus continues to talk to Mary saying: "Go instead to my brothers and tell them 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17). This happens in the early morning near the tomb, but in the evening of the same day Jesus appears to the disciples in the absence of Thomas. A week later, Jesus appears again to the disciples in the presence of Thomas.

It was at His first appearance that Jesus said to the disciples: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). In the second appearance He said to Thomas: "Put your finger here, see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side..." (John 20:27). We need to take note of the fact that Jesus said in John 15:26 that He would send the Counsellor to the disciples from the Father, "...the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father..."

From the above statements, we can conclude that the preconditions for the giving of the Spirit and the touching of the body of the Lord had already been met; hence the giving of the Spirit to the disciples and the allowing of Thomas to put his hand into the Lord's side. On the question of the giving of the Spirit, Lightfoot sums it up thus: "...this gift is dependent upon the Lord's prior return to the Father..." (Lightfoot 1960:331). We can further conclude that the Lord Jesus must have gone to the Father after His talk with Mary in the morning but before His appearance to the disciples in the evening of that same day.

This sequence of events shows the urgency of the matter. In chapter 20, John is depicting the Jesus who cares so much about His disciples that He gives them special and preferential treatment. Jesus could not let the sun go down before the disciples' need was met or attended to. His liberation was not to come later nor was the resumption of relations with His disciples to be postponed by even one day. Here John gives us a vivid picture of the Christ who cared so much about His disciples that He could not leave them unattended. This was not going to be a once-off occurrence but a pattern of His future dealings with them. During the three days when Jesus was in the tomb, contact was lost between Jesus and His disciples. This contact needed to be re-established, and the only one who could do it was Jesus, the resurrected Lord.

In an effort to see chapter 20 in a bigger picture, we recognize the presence of at least four main ideas there. The risen Lord comes to His disciples to demonstrate His sovereignty. He succeeds in doing so because He enters the room where they are with the doors locked. This was to play an important factor in their later ministry. Jesus also shows them His wounds in order to demonstrate to them that it is indeed Him who was crucified who has now risen from the dead. This was to reassure them of their faith in Him.

### **4.3 THE APOSTLES' MISSION STATED**

After this He reminds them of His mission for which He died and thus commissioning them to continue with this mission. Jesus wanted the apostles to know their new function without a shadow of a doubt. He said in John 20:21 : "...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you". By this He was making them aware of the importance of their new

responsibility. They were to do exactly what He had been doing while He was still in the world. The apostles' job was to carry the same weight that Jesus' carried. Jesus was transferring the power that the Father had given Him to the apostles.

The apostles were being given the same mandate that Jesus had brought with Him from heaven. The significance of this mandate was in the personal giving of it by Jesus Himself. He emphasizes the fact that His sending was in the same format that He had received His from the Father.

It is this commissioning that leads to the next step which Jesus takes. Realizing their limitations at the time, Jesus enables the apostles to carry out this great task by giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Swetnam makes an important observation that in this chapter, "...Jesus becomes the focal point of the passage, not the disciples" (Swetnam 1993:560). Indeed it is Jesus who takes the stage most of the time in this chapter. This must be because He is the One doing the work that needs to be done at this stage.

#### **4.4 JOHN'S PRESENTATION OF JESUS**

The Johannine Jesus is different from the synoptic Jesus in that John gives his theological interpretation of this Jesus. The events that John records are already interpreted by the writer. The events of Jesus in John are not straightforward events but are an interpretation by the writer in that he selects those events that help bring a particular point home. "Interpreted history may represent more truly the facts of a situation than a mere chronicle of events".(Ladd 1993:257)

What is hidden about Jesus in the synoptics is explicit in John. The resurrection story of Jesus is recorded in such a way that the full meaning of Jesus is caught by the readers, though it is the same Jesus. Ladd also notes that John does not give the verbatim report of the words of Jesus. The Johannine Jesus comes out as the Creator or life. The writer successfully handles this by using different events which are related and they all point to the same goal.

John presents the one aspect of his theology in the sphere of dualism. He speaks of the world below and the world above. These two contrast each other. He also brings in the contrast between darkness and light, flesh and spirit. John also deals with the idiom of the world (kosmos), sin, unbelief and belief. He also brings out the subject of eschatological dualism where the world below is invaded by the world above (Ladd 1993:265).



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In John, the new creation that Jesus brings into the world below is not only something to be enjoyed in the future, but people start enjoying it in this life. Eternal life in John is both present and future (realized and eschatological). The personification of the Word as Jesus is another significant departure from the synoptics. The Word also comes through as the Creator, the pre-existent and incarnate One. The Logos is the agent of creation. All these indicate to us that John's theology is different from that of the synoptics.

Having discussed the issues of John 20 in a broader context we shall now turn to a detailed discussion on John 20:22 in the next chapter. Let us now look at what these issues are.

## CHAPTER 5:

### EXEGETICAL ISSUES IN JOHN 20:22

#### 5.1 EXEGETICAL DISCUSSION OF JOHN 20:22

Let us now concentrate on the meaning of “With that He breathed...” We can take this phrase to be the climax of the new creation theme that runs through John’s gospel. The reason I call this a climax of the new creation will become clearer later in this chapter and the next one.

"John 20: 1-23 includes all the elements of what we can call 'the resurrection package' : the tomb is found by the women to be empty on Sunday morning (John 20:1ff): some interpretive word is provided by angelic representatives (John 20:20): the appearance of Jesus to the disciples as a group (John 20:19ff): and finally the promise of power for mission through the promised Holy Spirit who will continue the Lordship of Jesus within history (John 20:22) " (Lyon 1988 : 73).

According to Lyon, John 20:22 is a promise for power for mission ; not an empowering in itself. According to him, this is something that is still to happen in the future. He does not see it as an action that took place immediately at the time when Jesus spoke the word to His disciples. It is difficult to see how Lyon arrives at this interpretation since the tense of the verb that is used here is in the present

instead of the future, for Jesus says : Λαβετε πνευμα αγιον In so saying Jesus was performing an action there and then.

For Lyon's argument to be able to hold water, the Greek tense would have to be different from the one used in the original text. Jesus uses a present imperative instead of a future tense. This suggests the opposite of what Lyon argues for. There is a good reason why Jesus used an imperative. He was dealing with a situation that needed attention immediately. He was addressing a need that had arisen because of His departure from the disciples. The situation itself dictated a need for something to be done immediately, not at some later time.

Why would Christ procrastinate something that He is able to do here and now? Throughout His earthly ministry, Christ always attended to needy situations immediately, particularly the needs of people who came to Him for help. How much more the people who were to carry on with the ministry which He had started. For this ministry to have continuity, there was an immediate need for the "filling" of Jesus' position on His return to the Father, and the disciples, being the obvious choice to fill this position, needed to be empowered at that time.

Kittel argues that "εμφυσω is found from the time of Hippocrates in classical Greek, and also in the Koine and the Septuagint. According to the latter, God 'blows' His living breath 'into' man or 'upon' him by His pneuma. The breath of God awakens life in all creation and when it blows over the place of the dead,

bones rise up to new life. Thus God will impart His Spirit into Israel that it may come to life again "(Kittel 1985 : 536). Kittel sees the use of "εμφυσάω " in John 20:22 to mean "to breathe upon or over ", and that because it is used of Jesus here, then it means that Jesus takes the place of God.

A closer look at Kittel's interpretation gives us the understanding that what Jesus did to His disciples was similar to what God the Father did to Adam in the beginning. It was God's breath which created life in Adam ; and similarly it was Christ's breath which would create life in His disciples. These men were 'dead' in fear of the Jews. They probably had no more hope after their Master was taken away from them. But Christ being 'life' Himself, was at that time imparting life into them. Just as what God did to Adam by breathing into him was not a process but an instantaneous act, so was Christ's life-giving breath to the disciples.

Jesus was sending the disciples as the Father had sent Him and He was providing them with the "furniture" for the task. The breathing on them was an extraordinary sign of His communicating this extraordinary "furniture" to them. It is clear that these men were extraordinarily gifted, without any previous study and acquired abilities - it was from the Spirit of God that they were empowered. McNeile puts it thus: "....the gift of spiritual life to the apostles was imparted by the 'breath' of Christ this quickening power of His Spirit could not be released until the glorification i.e. the death of Jesus" (McNeile 1967:677).

John uses here the same image which was used to describe the communication of natural life in Genesis, but here it is used to express the communication of spiritual life of recreated humanity. When Christ *ενεφύσησεν* on the disciples, He was also demonstrating that He and the Father are one. In the words of Westcott we can say that "the Lord showed that the Spirit was not the Spirit of the Father only but also His own " (Westcott 1908:350) This means that Christ is God just as the Father is God and both have the Spirit. Westcott goes on to argue that "the presence of this new life in humanity in the disciples communicated to them by Christ was the necessary condition for the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost" (Westcott 1908:350).

What Westcott is arguing is that the great event of Pentecost would not have been possible before these men were quickened, even though at Pentecost other disciples were included. This means that it would have been a futile exercise to give the gifts of Pentecost to men who were not spiritually recreated. When Christ 'breathed' on the disciples, it must have been the time when He enabled them to understand the scriptures. Luke's recording in Luke 24:45 says : "Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures". According to Luke, Jesus did this when He appeared to His disciples for the first time after resurrection, which is similar to what John is narrating in chapter 20 :19-23.

What later happened at Pentecost could then be understood by the disciples because they could now understand the scriptures. According to Westcott's

reasoning, the act of breathing on the disciples testifies to the power of Resurrection while the gift(s) of Pentecost answer(s) to the power of Ascension. It therefore can be concluded that it was the act of Christ's breathing on the disciples that helped them to understand the scriptures. The long-term effects of the  $\epsilon\nu\epsilon\phi\upsilon\sigma\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$  were seen in the way in which the apostles went about preaching the risen Christ, and how much they were prepared to suffer for Christ's sake.

The disciples, through the Lord's breathing, were being instituted by the grace of His Spirit. "And indeed to govern the Church of God, to bear the embassy of eternal salvation, to set up God's kingdom on earth and to lift men up to heaven is something far above human capacity. It is not surprising therefore that no man is found fit unless he be inspired by the Holy Spirit " (Parker 1961: 204).

Parker gives us the understanding that Christ here was giving to the disciples what they needed, (but did not possess), to accomplish their mission. It is Christ's glory alone to form those whom He appoints to be teachers of the Church. The disciples were given unique authority by the Lord. They knew Christ well enough that He gave them the authority to tell someone who trusted Christ that his sins were forgiven, and to affirm the remaining of the sins of those who rejected Christ. "Although Christ could have bestowed grace on His apostles by a secret inspiration, He chose to add a visible breathing to confirm them the better" (Parker 1961:205). This breathing was to be to them a visible sign of them being

confirmed by the Lord Himself, thus giving them more reason to trust Him and have renewed faith in Him. It was a form of recreating the disciples' faith.

The breathing on the disciples can also be seen as a special way of putting them aside for a specific purpose. It was a form of an anointing. When Christ entered upon His ministry He was first anointed by the Holy Spirit by God the Father. His action here can be seen to be a similar process performed by Him on His disciples. The disciples were being set aside as the first fruits of the resurrection, by the Lord Himself - a wonderful demonstration of His Godhead! Christ was completing their spiritual relationship with Him.

The word 'breathed' (ενεφύσησεν), occurs only here in the New Testament. Almost every commentator sees in it an allusion to Genesis 2:7 as well as Ezekiel 37:9. "This suggests that John sees the constitution of the Church after the resurrection as a kind of new creation " (Clements 1977 : 611). Clements sees here the disciples being "created anew" as well as being given a task to perform.

By this we may understand Clements to be saying that the disciples were being made new beings. We also see a recreation motif in John 20:22 through Jesus' ενεφύσησεν. This was justified by the new responsibilities that they were to assume from then onwards. Their training had now come to an end and they were to assume full responsibility of the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

We can see in this an induction of the new leadership of the Church. While Christ was with them, they played a secondary role, but now that He was leaving them, they were to assume the primary role of leading the other disciples as well as the multitudes who were to be brought into light later.

What Christ was doing here was putting the disciples on a higher level, giving them a higher status -making them what they were not while He was still with them. While Jesus was with them He was their Comforter, that is why He said in John 14:16 that He would "ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor, to be with you forever", for He would not be physically with them any longer, yet they needed to be with God continually in order to perform their duties and carry out their responsibilities well.



We should see the disciples as the core group which Jesus was here giving a new shape. Jesus was dealing with the main group as His means of caring for the rest of the Church. If everything was well with them, as the nucleus of the church, then the church was on its way to success. Christ was here investing life in His disciples who were to distribute or give life to others themselves.

Lenski sees value in the use of the phrase "having said this". He sees this as the connection between the new act with the preceding word. Lenski comments thus: "He who sends enables those whom he sends ; and the enabling is the gift of the Holy Spirit".(Lenski 1961:1371). What Lenski proposes is that the ενεφουσησεν

is a direct consequence of the "sending" of John 20:21. Because Christ sent them, He provided the means to do the job they were being sent to do. The disciples' mission was no different from that of Christ, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you "(John 20:21). The use of the dative αυτοι shows that all those present were included in this distribution.

Lenski sees John 20:22 in a way that is opposite to that of Lyon. At the beginning of this chapter we noted Lyon's argument that the breathing of Jesus on the disciples refers to a promise for mission. But now let us listen to what Lenski has to say about this.

Lenski argues thus: "The breath of Jesus was, indeed, no mere symbol of the Spirit, nor was the act of breathing a mere symbolical act that only represented bestowal ... in this act of breathing of Jesus, whatever may be considered a symbol becomes at the same time an actual means of bestowal. The chosen means accords with the purpose for which it is used, with the gift it imparts. It is this accord and fitness which makes it look like a symbol... Both the preceding word, 'I myself also send you', and the following word, 'receive', shut out the use of a symbol and demand that for the sending and for the receiving an actual means be employed" (Lenski 1961:1371).

The argument that Lenski offers is more attractive. Christ was busy with a particular mission during His lifetime on earth, but now He was about to leave this world, His mission was to continue, and not to stop at His departure. Christ

was therefore not focusing on something that would happen in the future but on something happening on the here and now. He is sending the disciples now, just as the Father had sent Him. He wants the disciples to take over immediately from Him. Jesus sought to avoid a vacuum in His mission. There could not have been a period between His ascension and Pentecost when no one on earth was in charge of this great mission.

Another argument is the author's use of the word λαβετε which is punctiliar. Being punctiliar, it denotes reception there and then and not a process of reception that continues or keeps on happening.

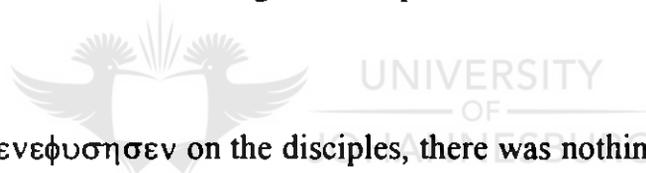
Since this word is also imperative, it tells us that the gift of the Holy Spirit is imparted into the hearts of the recipients. Just as an ear receives sound without having to make any effort when the sound waves reach the ear, so were the hearts of the disciples when the Spirit reached them, there was not an effort necessary from them to realise this gift.

Another teaching that stands out in the gospel of John is that of belief. Whatever Jesus does, the author portrays Jesus' actions as those that are aimed at helping people to believe in God the Father and God the Son. John spends more time on the subject of life in Christ as against the other three gospels combined. He also spends more time on the subject of belief than do the synoptic gospels combined. From the above-mentioned points, it is clear that John's approach in his narration is completely different from that of Luke. John wants his readers to see Jesus as

the life-giver and the one in whom and through whom people should believe.

John 20:22 can therefore be viewed as falling within this aim of the author. It can be suggested that this verse should be seen in the light of Christ being the giver of life and the one in and through whom the disciples were to believe.

On the basis of the facts already mentioned on the purpose of the book of John and our exegesis of the word  $\epsilon\nu\epsilon\phi\upsilon\sigma\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$ , the general interpretation of John 20:22 as a partial bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the disciples is inadmissible. Jesus' action should be seen as a means of injecting full life into His disciples. It stands out as a complete action in its own right that does not need to be followed up by some other action to bring it to completion.



When Jesus  $\epsilon\nu\epsilon\phi\upsilon\sigma\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$  on the disciples, there was nothing more that needed to be done on the disciples in order to achieve His purpose. Whenever Jesus recreated the life of the lame, the deaf and the dumb, He always performed only one action and His purpose (to give true life or restore life) was accomplished. There was never a need at a later stage to supplement what He had done earlier to make' it complete/whole. It is therefore suggested that the same analogy be applied here. Another submission is that the breathing of the Lord on His disciples should be viewed as serving a different purpose from the bestowal at Pentecost. The act of breathing in John 20:22 was performed on a different type of people from those that are dealt with at Pentecost. The purpose of Christ's

breathing in John 20:22 was fully realized first, hence Pentecost could take place at a different level and for a different purpose.

## **5.2 THE EFFECTS OF BREATHING ON THE DISCIPLES.**

This thesis further agrees with those who see in John 20:22 a separate event from the event of bestowal at Pentecost. We think that these two occurrences are not the same. We should not make them one when they are actually two separate occurrences. In our understanding, based on the discoveries of the meaning of *εμφυσᾶω* and the purpose of the book of John, we see in John 20:22 the recreation of life in the disciples by the One who was Life Himself and the Source of Life as well.



We also see in this verse the Master using this opportunity to make His disciples to believe in Him again. These men needed their lives to be recreated and to have their faith renewed. This was certainly accomplished because those same disciples were a different people after the breathing and they were able to understand the scriptures. Another proof that they were really recreated and a different kind of disciples was at Ascension.

When Jesus was taken away from them to heaven, they saw His departure from them with a different eye. Luke records this thus : "While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple

praising God "(Luke 24: 51-53). This is a completely different picture from that given of the same disciples before the breathing. Before the breathing, John says : "On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews... "(John 20:19).

Surely something had happened to these disciples to have removed their fear and to made them rejoice at their Master's ascension. Instead of continuing locking themselves up in a room, they went public - they went to the temple and praised God there. Their focus was now on the risen Christ, and the Christ who had ascended to heaven. What better proof do we need to show us that these men's lives had undergone a complete change ? And this change could not have come about in a better way than the Lord's breathing on His own chosen disciples whom He had tasked to lead His church. Only recreated disciples could engage in such changes so quickly.

### ***5.3 THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN JOHN 20:22***

The Lord's action in John 20:22 is a clear sign that He regarded His earthly ministry to have been under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. Ladd has this to say in this regard : "That John conceives of Jesus as carrying out His mission in the power of the Spirit is proven by the fact that after His resurrection He imparts to the disciples the Holy Spirit to equip them for their ministry... " (Ladd 1993:325).

But we are also aware of the argument that the Holy Spirit could not have been given to the eleven disciples according to John 20:22. This argument is based on John 7:39 which says : ..... Up to that time the Spirit had not yet been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified". It should be noted that it is John who records both these incidents under consideration here. John 20:22 cannot be in contradiction to John 7:39 because of what we know the Bible to be, an inspired Word of God.

To take the argument further, we ask: What does "glorified" mean in the context of John 7:39? Jesus said to the disciples in John 20:22 λαβετε πνευμα αγιον. Is this not an indication that He had now been glorified? Does the death and resurrection of Jesus not make Him qualify for His glorification ? Even if it can be shown that after His resurrection but before His ascension Jesus' glorification had not yet taken place, would that stop the sovereign Lord from giving the Holy Spirit to the disciples before His ascension?

With these questions in mind, this study suggests that Jesus was able to and did give the disciples the Holy Spirit according to John 20:22, for the same reason that has already been mentioned above - to give life to the fear-dead disciples. In terms of Ladd's view, if this did happen then it is necessary to assume two ascensions, which he bases on John 20:17. We further see this giving of the Spirit in the light of John 6:63 and John 3:6 that the Spirit was given to the disciples as a source of life to their spiritual beings. Dunn's view is more acceptable to us when he says: "... the Spirit could not be received from Jesus until Jesus had been

glorified (in death and resurrection - 7:39) ; only then could those who believed in Him receive the Spirit “ (Dunn 1979:179).

According to the above quotation from Dunn, this thesis agrees with him that the occasion of John 20:22 does allow us to conclude that Jesus had then been glorified. Actually, Dunn goes a step further to say : “In other words, it is not until after Jesus' death and resurrection that it is possible even for the Pentecostal to speak of the disciples as 'genuine converted Christians’” (Dunn 1979:179). “John 20:22 has made it evident that the disciples' experience was determined by the process of salvation-history. God's unfolding plan of redemption was at a critical transition phase as a result of the incarnation ; ... The disciples lived through this transition period, and during it their spiritual experience was limited to that which was possible and appropriate at each stage” (Dunn, 1979:181).

Dunn suggests that the transition period lasted at least from Jesus' death to Pentecost, or from the beginning of His ministry to Pentecost, or from His birth to Pentecost. Dunn draws the conclusion that the experience of the apostles throughout the transition period cannot be regarded as a pattern for experience today. Whereas for them it was staggered, entry into the blessings of the new dispensation is immediate.

“If a norm is desired for the gift of the Spirit we have it not in John 20:22 or Acts 2:4 but in Acts 2:38” (Dunn 1979 :182). Acts 2:38 says: “...Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of

your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It can be assumed that the requirements that are laid down in this verse had been met by the disciples.

Another aspect about the giving of the Spirit to the disciples was that Jesus had already promised them that the Spirit will be in them, in John 14:17, in order for them to continue with the ministry of the Word. It was the Spirit who was to make their words and deeds not to be merely human acts but channels of divine grace. The disciples would then be sources of life for those who would hear their word and believe it.

The life that was passed on to the disciples by Jesus' *ενεφουσησεν* on them would in turn be passed on to others --- the life would continually flow from them to others in the spreading of the gospel. The life would help their hearers to be *ανωθεν*, which is a prerequisite for eternal life.

#### ***5.4. DIFFERENT EXEGETICAL VIEWS ON JOHN 20:22***

With regards to the breathing on the disciples, there are different opinions as to the extent of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. According to Beasley-Murray "Calvin considered 'the Spirit was given to the apostles now in such a way that they were only sprinkled with His grace and not saturated with full power.' Bengel viewed the gift as an 'earnest' of Pentecost, Westcott as the power of new life anticipating the power for ministry; Bruce inverts the order seeing the Easter

gift as empowerment for ministry, to be followed by the Spirit's gift of new life at Pentecost" (Beasley-Murray 1987:381).

Beasley-Murray himself disagrees with the idea that the gift of Christ to the disciples was a partial bestowal of the Spirit who is to be fully given at Pentecost. On this note this research agrees with him. The other theologians cited above, interpret this passage as a partial bestowal. Parker shares the idea of partial bestowal when he says : "The Spirit was given to the apostles now in such a way that they were only sprinkled with His grace and not saturated with full power. For when the Spirit appeared on them in tongues of fire, they were entirely renewed" (Parker 1961:205).

In this regard, Carson argues that the bestowal of the Spirit in John 20:22 is a sign that the Spirit will be given in the near future. Among other reasons he argues that the imperative λαβετε does not necessarily generate a sense of completion or immediacy, and that the results of the Johannine Pentecost are disappointing. Carson suggests that this episode should not be regarded as an insufflation, and that the verb should be regarded as "to breathe" and not as "breathed on them". Carson also questions the exclusion of Thomas from the bestowal of John 20:22.

Carson says: "there is no intrinsic reason for thinking that the imperative of 20:22, *Receive the Holy Spirit*, must be experienced immediately".(Carson 1991:653). Hatina argues thus in response: "...if the context is somehow implied

in the statement, then I must beg to differ, for the proximate context gives ample evidence for immediacy...Furthermore since Jesus' commissioning is in the present tense(v.21), then ought not one to assume that the ensuing verse also has a present or immediate nuance?"(Hatina 1993:198-199).

To interpret John 20:22 as a partial bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the disciples is to opt for an easy way out of the complex situation which is caused by the differences in John and Luke's narrations of the events after resurrection and after ascension. The following should be borne in mind when trying to understand this passage:

John and Luke may have had different purposes when they wrote their gospels and Acts (for Luke). In his writing, John was not concerned about chronology, while Luke was a more precise author.

Hatina concludes thus: "As God breathed life into man and gave him words and understanding,...so also Jesus breathes the Spirit into His disciples giving them the words and understanding of eternal life"(Hatina 1993:219).

About this passage that we are looking at, Meier has this to say: "Church and gospel seem especially present in the great resurrection appearance of John 20:19-23, in which the risen Jesus commissions his fearful disciples by creating them anew. (Meier 1996:395). By so saying Meier sees in the action of the Lord Jesus the new creation of the disciples. Meier goes on to say: "...Christ creates a new community, a new humanity, the church. By His death and resurrection, the

heavenly Son of Man has recreated sinful man in His own image and likeness.(Meier 1996:396).We could not agree with Meier more.

Van Rossum argues differently with regards John 20:22. He first has the following to say: "...any suggestion of a partial giving of the Spirit is out of the question" (Van Rossum 1991:154). He disagrees with the idea of the Lord's breathing on the disciples as a symbolical proclamation of the future action on the disciples, and sees it rather as having its own particular meaning.

But Van Rossum's conclusion is slightly different from that of Lenski and others. He concludes his argument thus: "...the bestowing of the Holy Spirit on the disciples appears to be a gradual process rather than an event that happened only at one particular moment. This process starts on the Day of Resurrection,...and is fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and in the life of the Church after Pentecost" (Van Rossum 1991:155).

Swetnam views John 20:22 thus: "...there are not one but two occasions in which the Spirit is bestowed, and that the two bestowals are complementary" (Swetnam 1993:196).

From the above two views of Van Rossum and Swetnam, we can see that there is no common understanding of this verse. The one sees it as a single process with Pentecost while the other sees it as a process that stands alone, separate from the happenings of Pentecost.

We find in Hatina's writing a more persuasive argument which is stated thus: "...the insufflation in John 20:22 is a realistic eschatological fulfilment, foreshadowed not only in ancient Judaism, but also, and primarily, in the Gospel itself. When the risen Jesus breathes and says, 'Receive the Holy Spirit', the Spirit in a Paraclete role indwells the disciples and gives to them the life-giving words of Christ to carry on His prophetic ministry" (Hatina 1993:196). From Hatina's statement, we realise that the purpose of Jesus' breathing on the disciples is for the continuation of His ministry.

Ladd says: "However this verse be interpreted, it means at the least that Jesus was bestowing on the disciples the same Spirit that had descended on Him at His baptism and had filled Him during His ministry" (Ladd 1993:325).

For the purposes of this research, it is suggested that John 20:22 should be understood in the light of the transition stage in the life of the church ; and that what Christ did on that day was not to be a norm for the rest of the disciples. This was only necessary for the eleven who were the nucleus of the new church. We can compare the Lord's action with or even call it a 'special revelation' to the eleven apostles. It also seems that there is more value in understanding the breathing of Jesus Christ on the disciples as a separate event from that of Pentecost.

## 5.5 *THE ISSUE OF PENTECOST*

There is a need to say something about Pentecost. Having dealt with the lives of the disciples through His breathing on them, and having succeeded in making these disciples what He wanted them to be, the disciples were now ready to be used by Him to accomplish His purposes in the world. The findings of this study agree with Powell when he says : “At Pentecost they were signally anointed with power for service ; prior to this they were filled for holiness. The battles within must first be won, otherwise campaigns without will fail before they begin” (Powell 1962:426).

It took the Lord's wisdom to wait for the right moment before these disciples could be commissioned to perform their public ministry. What Powell says is true, Christ first dealt with the inner battles of these men before Pentecost. It was the breathing on them that took care of their battles, and they were won.

The Pentecost event suggests that there the Lord was making a public proclamation of His mission through the disciples. What the Lord did on that day was not for the sake of the disciples but for the general public to behold the acts of God through the disciples including the other disciples (for they were 120 at Pentecost). The disciples were only vehicles through which to reach the people God wanted to reach. The purpose of the event of Pentecost therefore, was to bring the public to faith in Jesus Christ, and not the disciples. It was a public

testimony that the disciples were the kind of men the Lord was happy to use to bring others to faith in Himself.



## CHAPTER 6

### THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 *IN GENERAL*

In our research into the meaning of the word ἐμφύσσω, we have seen that it had different meanings, but that it was mostly used where the creating or recreating of life was concerned. It also has different meanings when used in different contexts. We saw that in the beginning it meant the creation of new life in the first man. In the book of Ezekiel, we noticed that this word meant the bringing back of life into the bodies that had lost the life they once had.

The Apocrypha also confirmed the meaning of this word to be that of creating life where it did not exist. We have also looked at various writer's understanding of this rare word in the Scriptures, and we saw that there are different opinions on the interpretation of this word, resulting in different understanding of the whole verse.

The above discussion of the word ἐμφύσσω leads us to the conclusion that this word carries more meaning when it is interpreted to mean the creating of life, whether creating life that was not there before or recreating life that has been lost. What needs to be borne in mind is that the power to either create or recreate life is only in the living God, the Creator of the universe. For the purposes of this

study, the context in which ἐμφυσᾶω is used suggests that the Lord Jesus was recreating the life of His disciples. Strictly speaking one should not view this as the beginning of the new creation but rather as the beginning of the incorporation of man into the new creation which came into being in Christ by His incarnation, death, and resurrection. This is actualised in man by the Holy Spirit. This means therefore that the new creation started in Christ Himself. By His *breathing* on the disciples, Christ was including man in this new creation.

It can therefore be concluded that Christ's *breathing* on the disciples was an act of bringing them back to where they were before, recreating their faith in the living God. What Christ did to His disciples on that day, certainly brought a very significant difference in the life of the disciples themselves as well as the life of the church at large. Before the Lord's 'breathing' on them, the disciples were full of fear and possibly discouragement. The Lord Jesus found them in a locked room because of fear.

The actions of these men after this event, i.e. their meeting to study the Scriptures with other disciples, their rejoicing at the ascension of the Lord, indicate without any doubt that something had happened to them. The courage that they had after the Lord's *breathing* on them was no ordinary one but indeed from above. The disciples' lives had been recreated.

From the above mentioned facts, it is reasonable to suggest that this recreation took place immediately. It was not a process that took time before it happened. In the light of what has just been said, it can be argued that the empowering of the disciples took place in full. They received everything they needed to carry out their mission as the Lord had sent them. The Lord could not have given them partial empowering because the task which He had given them to fulfil was not a partial one. We also suggest that this empowering was done took place immediately. It does not seem to have been a gradual process, if we view John 20:22 as a separate event from that of Pentecost.

It also seems to us that what the Lord Jesus did here was specifically meant for the apostles only. This is so because they were the nucleus of the new community which was being created. It was necessary for this core group to be furnished in this way because they were to step in and continue with the work as Christ had done. We also conclude that when Christ did this empowering He was not intending for it to be a pattern to be followed by the church at a later stage. It was specifically meant for the eleven apostles because they had a peculiar task to perform, and it was a transition stage in the life of the newly formed church.

In my understanding this was a once off event because the church was going through a transition stage. It is not necessary to expect this same thing to happen again because there is no need for it now. It is also necessary to realise that when Christ said "Receive the Holy Spirit" He was not giving them gifts like they were given at Pentecost but He was rather empowering them for service. This therefore

leads us to the conclusion that Jesus' *breathing* on the disciples was solely for recreating purposes and was not intended to give gifts of the Holy Spirit. We also suggest that when Jesus said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' He meant the real Holy Spirit. We do not see this as a symbol for that which was to happen in the future.

John 20:22 therefore falls within the macro structure of the book of John as a whole where Christ is portrayed as having come into the world in order to give life to man kind. The life that Jesus came to give to man in general was first given to His chosen ones who were to pass this on to others. Jesus indeed was able to achieve this task because before left this world, a new community had been born, a new humanity had been created and humanity was never to be the same again.



The author of the gospel of John portrayed Jesus in the beginning of the gospel as the Creator. What we see Jesus doing in John 20:22 is exactly that. Jesus is therefore correctly represented by the author, He is Creator of both old and new things.

## 6.2 APPLICATION

The pattern Jesus used in the preparation of the disciples for their ministry should be used by today's church. Just as Jesus spent so much time with the apostles in preparing them, so should it be with the leadership of the church today. The church should invest as much as possible in equipping those who should take a

leadership role. They need to be given all the skills necessary for successful leadership.

Having said that it must be said that it is even more important for those who would be in church leadership to go beyond the equipping with technical skills. They *must* receive a special preparation from above. God the Holy Spirit must deal with them first.

Only when the leader has been dealt with by the Holy Spirit can a godly and effective ministry be realized *in the church*. The apostles successful ministry was because the Holy Spirit had dealt with them first. The Christian leader must always be convicted by the Spirit and put on a “higher level” by the Him in order to lead God’s people. The apostles’ leadership was accompanied by visible results, so should it be with the leaders of the church today. I do think that this principle should be applicable at all times in the church of God, for God meant it to be so. Only recreated leaders can produce recreated followers. The disciples’ battles were won on the day the Lord Jesus “breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’”.

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