### The Living God

“Yahweh lives” (Ps 18:46). Scripture abounds with references to this truth, as seen in the following examples:

- For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God (Deut 5:26).

- For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God? (1 Sam 17:26).

- But Yahweh is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King (Jer 10:10).

- He is the living God and enduring forever (Dan 6:26).

- Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16).

- As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father… (Jn 6:57).

- (We) preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God (Acts 14:15).

- But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God (Heb 12:22).

Often the expression “living God” is found in contexts which emphasize God’s power (Deut 5:26; 2 Cor 3:3). Other contexts connect this phrase with God’s response to people. When His people are under threat, the living God comes to their defense (1 Sam 17:26; Josh 3:10). When people seek Him, the living God is ready to respond (Ps 42:2). When people put their trust in Him, the living God is ready to save them (1 Tim 4:10; Job 19:25; Dan 6:20). When people rebel against Him, the living God responds in wrath (Heb 3:12; 10:31; Matt 26:63; Jer 10:10-11).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Let us further characterize the living God. First, He is self-sufficient. This is called His “aseity.” He has life within Himself and needs no external support (Jn 5:26; 1:4). In Exodus 3:14, He speaks of Himself as the self-existing one: “I Am Who I Am.” The following passages also emphasize His aseity:

- …nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all {people} life and breath and all things (Acts 17:25).

- Who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? (Rom 11:35).

- Who has directed the Spirit of Yahweh, or as His counselor has informed Him? (Isa 40:13).

- If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what does He receive from your hand? (Job 35:7).

- Can a vigorous man be of use to God, or a wise man be useful to himself? (Job 22:2).

- If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains (Ps 50:12).

- Who has given to Me that I should repay {him?} {Whatever} is under the whole heaven is Mine (Job 41:11).

Pink devotes special attention to the idea of God’s aseity: “God was alone: self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied; in need of nothing… creating… added nothing to God’s essentiality.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Moreover, “He sustains all, but He remains independent of all. He gives to all, but is enriched by none.”[[3]](#footnote-3) However, Bloesch cautions us about an extreme view of God’s aseity that existed among the Hellenists – God is indifferent to people. Bloesch clarifies, “We can please God, but we cannot enrich God, since God is the summit of all perfections.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

God’s life is also stable and indestructible. The author of Hebrews writes about the Lord Jesus, “…who has become {such} not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life” (Heb 7:16). Isaiah says, “The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired” (Isa 40:28). God’s life is so stable and steady that the formula for making an oath in Israel was, “As the Lord lives!” Thus, the one swearing the oath claims that his/her promise is as sure as God’s life. It is interesting to note that God never objected to people using such a formula (see Jer 4:2; 12:16), since by it the stability and indestructability of His life was being proclaimed. Even God occasionally used this formula (Num 14:21; Ezek 5:11).[[5]](#footnote-5)

The Bible also teaches that God is the source of all life. Sometimes that is expressed directly (Neh 9:6), and sometimes symbolically by the metaphor “fountain of living water” (Jer 17:13; Ps 36:9). As the source of life, God gives life to all living things. Both Old and New Testaments testify to this truth. God said to Moses, “See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life” (Deut 32:39). Paul writes, “I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things” (1 Tim 6:13). Luke concurs, “…nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all {people} life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:25).[[6]](#footnote-6)

In fact, the life force in humans traces back to God’s breathing into Adam the “breath of life” (Gen 2:7). We see a similar event in Rev 11:11, “But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them (i.e., the two witnesses), and they stood on their feet.” We can also cite Isaiah: “Thus says God Yahweh, Who created the heavens and stretched them out… Who gives breath to the people on it” (Isa 42:5). Elihu testifies of the same: “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4; сf. Job 27:3; 34:14-15; Ecc. 12:7). So then, life is a direct gift from God.

Even after death, God is able to raise the dead and restore life (Jn 11:43-44). John also writes, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes” (Jn 5:21; сf. 6:39-40). Paul adds, “God, who gives life to the dead…” (Rom 4:17; сf. 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Cor 1:9).[[7]](#footnote-7)

God’s ability to give life sets Him apart from all others. We typically classify entities as “animate” or “inanimate.” God, though, is both “animate” and “animating.” Jesus is described as “a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45; ср. 1 Tim 6:13). He says about Himself, “He who eats Me, he also will live because of Me” (Jn 6:57).

The final topic for our consideration is the Old Testament use of the expressing “the living God” in contrast with the lifeless idols that the other nations (and sometimes Israel) worshipped. The Old Testament prophets often emphasized the folly of worshipping lifeless images. Isaiah wrote, “They lift it upon the shoulder {and} carry it; they set it in its place and it stands {there.} It does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; it cannot deliver him from his distress” (Isa 46:7). In Ps 115:5-7, we read,

They have mouths, but they cannot speak. They have eyes, but they cannot see. They have ears, but they cannot hear. They have noses, but they cannot smell. They have hands, but they cannot feel. They have feet, but they cannot walk. They cannot make a sound with their throat.

God called the Gentiles to turn from idolatry and serve the living God. Paul preached “the gospel to you (Gentiles) that you should turn from these vain things to a living God” (Acts 14:15), and praised the Thessalonians that they “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (1 Thes 1:9).[[8]](#footnote-8)

If only God is the living God and idols are lifeless, then He is the only true God. Therefore, the expression “the living God” is sometimes used as a synonym for “the true God” (Jer 10:10; Dan 6:26). Peter also confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, the “Son of the Living God” (Matt 16:16), i.e., the Son of the One True God.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. Ellis E. E. Life // Douglas J. D. New Bible Dictionary. – 2nd ed. – Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1962. – P. 697-700. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pink A. W. The Attributes of God. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975. – P. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bloesch D. G. God the Almighty. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1995. – P. 208, 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Huey F. Jeremiah, Lamentations // The New American Commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. – P. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ellis, p. 697-700; Pieper F. Christian Dogmatics. – St. Louis, MО: Concordia Publishing House, 1953. – V. 1. – P. 447. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ellis, p. 697-700. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)