

THE LIVING GOD

by

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I. Introduction

God is given the curious description “the living God” about thirty times in the Scriptures. These uses are found in both the Old and New Testaments and are practically divided equally. In relation to importance, Thomas Oden has indeed even said that, “The living God (chai ‘elohim, theo zontos) is the Subject of holy Scripture.”¹ This intriguing expression seems to invoke a grand view of God, but what is actually meant by this concept that might be at the very heart of Scripture? This paper will investigate each of the thirty times this phrase is used in order to determine the range of meaning, and what specific meaning is intended within each context. This project does not begin with a predefined concept of what this phrase means, nor is it an attempt to prove a particular point, rather it will seek to establish a clear understanding of the definition that the research reveals. The definition will reflect a biblical perspective and will not depend on extra-biblical sources. Therefore, this study will be limited to direct quotations and the context where each phrase is found.

Interaction with various commentators will be generally separated from the main text and placed in the footnotes. This will help promote flow in an effort to avoid tedium as each text is briefly examined. Likewise, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Septuagint information will be placed in the footnotes for easy comparison.

¹ Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God: Systematic Theology, Volume One* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 64.

Once the range of meaning is determined, the research will then conclude with relevant applications for life in the present world. The principle being followed is that one's education is only as beneficial as it is made practical.

II. Old Testament: Fifteen References

*Deut. 5:26*² “*the voice of the living God*”³ The first place that this expression is used is in the context of Moses recapping the history of the giving of the law to Israel. The leaders of Israel, in their fear of God, had asked Moses to speak with God on their behalf lest they die. Thus this word is used as a descriptor of God whose unveiled presence would bring sure doom upon them if they did not maintain proper fear and obedience of Him (5:29). Thus God's direct involvement and contact with men is in view, as well as the possibility of God's judgment resulting from that contact.⁴

*Josh. 3:10*⁵ “*the living God is among you*” The “living God” here is the one who will without fail drive out the inhabitants of Canaan before entering Israel. As proof of this, God parts

² BHS: אֱלֹהֵי הַחַיִּים (MP) LXX: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS).

This and all subsequent such determinations were made with the BibleWorks Greek text in the BibleWorks software program version 7. For the New Testament this program uses the Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition. Copyright (c) 1993 Deutsch Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart. For the Old Testament this program uses LXX Septuaginta (Old Greek Jewish Scriptures) edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Copyright (c) 1935 by the Württembergische Bibelanstalt / Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (German Bible Society), Stuttgart.

³ English Standard Version referenced unless otherwise indicated. English chapter and verse divisions were retained where discrepancies exist.

⁴ Moshe Weinfeld (*Deuteronomy I-II*, vol. 5 of Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 324.) sees the emphasis being on the contrast between “Living God” and the “mortal” (ESV: flesh). However, it seems more appropriate to argue that their fear is based upon this living God acting further (beyond speaking, and showing Himself forth in the fire) to bring about their death. The focus of the context seems to have to do more with God's action in relation to man rather than comparisons to man (5:6, 9-11, 15, 29, 33) – though there may be an element of that contrast as well.

⁵ BHS: אֱלֹהֵי הַחַיִּים (MS) LXX: θεὸς ζῶν (Pres/Act/Part/Nom/MS)

the Jordan before the Ark of the Covenant as they cross into the promised land. Thus God is directly and supernaturally involved in His contact with men, and the promise of that continued involvement. This would be seen militarily as He fought for them and brought them into the land.⁶

1 Sam. 17:26 “*defy the armies of the living God?*” In this case, David is questioning why the Philistines are being allowed to defy the armies of the “living God” through the unanswered challenge of Goliath. Either David is here clarifying that the army of Israel is the army of the living God (cf. verse 25), or he is clarifying that it is not the army of Israel that Goliath is really defying but the armies of “living” God. Regardless, it is God that is being defied and mocked. David’s view of God does not find that acceptable. His view of God is of a God involved in the affairs of men, one who can be trusted to intervene, and one who judges those

⁶ Trent C. Butler (*Joshua*, vol. 7 of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1983], 46.) concurs that the focus of this designation is on God’s action with man by noting, “God’s actions will reveal God’s power and person. The living God is in the midst of Israel.” He also adds that, “...Israel’s God is thus contrasted to the other claimants to the title. Only Yahweh is active and alive.” That comment comes after noting some of the other instances of the use of this phrase. It is possible that an unwritten implication to that effect might be possible, but it is not emphasized in the current context.

⁷ BHS: אֲלֵהֶם תִּיָּם (MP) LXX: Does not contain this verse.

who defy Him. Thus the picture of God given here is of one involved with mankind, who defends His name, and who fights with those who fight with Him for His causes.⁸

*1 Sam. 17:36*⁹ “defied¹⁰ the armies of the living God” Here, David makes his case to Saul that he can defeat Goliath—who is again described by David as having defied the armies of the living God. David is willing to put his life on the line without hesitation because the living God is active among His people, defends His own name, and judges the defiant. Thus this highlights the activity of God among people in righteous judgment and on behalf of His people.¹¹

*2 Kings 19:4*¹² “mock¹³ the living God” This is the description of the promised Assyrian actions toward Jerusalem about which Hezekiah is telling Isaiah as he asks Isaiah to pray for them as the remnant. Hezekiah’s indignation at the mockery of the living God is in this way expressed. His view of God is seen as opposed to the view of God held by the Assyrians. They view Him as no different than the other gods of the nations. In light of all that, Hezekiah is

⁸ Ralph W. Klein (*1 Samuel*, vol. 10 of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1983], 178-79.) prefers to find the meaning of living God here from the use in Jeremiah 10:6-10 where it is contrasted with dead idols. This he sees from the brief reference in 17:43 to the gods of Goliath by which Goliath cursed David. This is a real, but secondary, element in the emphasis of the text. God is pictured as the living God by His action, His deliverance, and by His very intervention (17:37). The living God acts, which is what makes the implied contrast evident. This may be a subtle distinction, but if jumped over misses the main point on what makes God different, trustworthy, and real. This can be seen from 17:46 where David says the result will be that “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” He does not say that “all the earth may know that the real God is in Israel,” though that could be an implication. Walter Brueggemann (*First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, ed. James Mays [Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990], 128.) concurs that the focus is on the active nature of God in His involvement with man in this text by noting (without referring to any contrast between dead idols and the living God) that, “By his bold speech David introduces a new factor into the action: the ‘living God.’ Israel, who faces the Philistine threat in fear and immobility, acts as if God were irrelevant to the battle. If God is irrelevant in the face of the Philistines, all is lost for the Israelites. But David will not have it so. For David it is unthinkable to assess a battle (or anything else) apart from the rule of the living God.”

⁹ BHS: מִיָּדָיו מִלְּבָרִי (MP) LXX: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

¹⁰ “defied,” Piel/Perfect/3MS

¹¹ See fn. eight for a discussion of the context.

¹² BHS: יִלְעָגוּ מִיָּדָיו (MS) LXX: θεὸν ζῶντα (Pres/Act/Part/Acc/MS)

¹³ “Mock” here, Piel/Inf/cst, is the same word for “defied” in 1 Sam. 17:36 above.

asking for Isaiah to intercede to God for him in hopes that God will act. Thus in this usage the idea is of direct intervention in circumstances to bring about military deliverance from an enemy who is opposed to God. Here indeed there is also a contrast made between the incapable gods of the nations and the living God (cf. 18:33, 19:10-13). The difference is that the living God can and does interfere.¹⁴

*2 Kings 19:16*¹⁵ “*mock*¹⁶ *the living God*” This is in the prayer of Hezekiah when Sennacherib came against him again. Sennacherib is again said to mock the living God by his words. Hezekiah is once more pleading for God’s action. Thus, as was seen before, this is viewing God as the God who directly intervenes as His name is being mocked to bring military defeat upon the enemies of God. The contrast between incapable idols and the one living capable God is likewise also still in view.¹⁷

*Ps. 42:2*¹⁸ “*for the living God*” In this Psalm the psalmist longs for the living God, to see His intervention rescue him from his enemies and their reproach.¹⁹ In this instance God is declared to be the God of direct intervention, of judgment and deliverance, and accordingly worthy of the psalmist’s longing for His presence and hoping in His deliverance. Thus “living

¹⁴Walter Brueggemann (*1 & 2 Kings*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary, ed. R. Scott Nash [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000], 506.) heartily agrees, “This powerful phrase... asserts, against the testimony of the (Assyrian) empire, that Yahweh is a living God, a God with energy, will, and capacity to make things new, a self-starter who can restart the public process. The phrase shows Hezekiah to be one who trusts in Yahweh, for Yahweh will not roll over dead like the non-gods whom the Assyrians have defeated.”

¹⁵ BHS: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (MS) LXX: θεὸν ζῶντα (Pres/Act/Part/Acc/MS)

¹⁶ “Mock” here in Hebrew is exactly as used in 19:4.

¹⁷ See fn. fourteen for a discussion of the context.

¹⁸ BHS: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (Prep/MS) LXX: τὸν θεὸν τὸν ζῶντα (Def/Pres/Act/Part/Acc/MS)

¹⁹ cf. verses 3, 9-10 cf. also vs. 10, “reproach,” Piel/Perfect/3CP, same root word as in 2 Kings and 1 Samuel above.

God” here has the connotation of one who is involved in the lives of people and doing something about the inequities.²⁰

Ps. 84:2²¹ “*shout for joy to the living God (NET)*” The psalmist here longs to be with God in His temple because God is the God of hosts (armies, vs. 1, 3, 8, 11), who protects and gives gifts to those who are His (vs. 5, 9, 11). Thus this usage shows the Psalmist wanting God’s direct intervention and supernatural judgments to right the injustice of the situation, as well as wanting God’s gracious intervention and presence by means of blessing and fellowship.²²

Is. 37:4 and Is. 37:17 These verses are almost the same word for word as 2 Kings 19:4 and 2 Kings 19:16 respectively. To avoid repetition refer to the discussions there. They both match exactly in all of the areas relevant for this study.

²⁰ Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs (*The Book of Psalms*, The International Critical Commentary, ed. Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles Augustus Briggs [1906; repr., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960], 1: 365-67.) translate living God here as “the God of (my) life.” (They are assuming the “yod,” by a copyist slip, was left out. This conjectural emendation is argued for so that the text would match “the God of my life” in verse eight.) Mitchell Dahood (*Psalms I: 1-50*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965], 256.) notes this and rejects this emendation based on the imagery of living water which is related to God in Jer. 2:13. This is possible, though it is to be wondered if this Psalmist would have known of that prophetic portion at the time of the writing. Thus it seems preferable to argue that the connotations of the living God as the active, involved, intervening God is what is being alluded to here. This has been seen as a primary meaning in prior usages, and fits the context of the Psalm very well (cf. 42:3, 5, 9-11). Indeed the Psalmist feels forgotten because he is not currently seeing God interact within his situations as he expects, desires, and knows God can do.

²¹ BHS: יְהוָה־לֵּי (MS) LXX: θεὸν ζῶντα (Pres/Act/Part/Acc/MS)

²² Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs (*The Book of Psalms*, The International Critical Commentary, ed. Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles Augustus Briggs [1907; repr., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960], 2:225-26.) again emend the text to read “the God of my life.” The reason given is “unexampled syntax” because the sentence is difficult to explain otherwise. However as they note, the MT and the Versions all translate it “unto the living God.” Mitchell Dahood (*Psalms II: 51-100*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968], 280.) again disagrees and brings in the comparisons to the living water imagery in Jeremiah, while making the expression a vocative that begins the next verse. Again, this is possible, but it should be noted that none of the major translations have any trouble translating this simply “the living God” belonging to the end of verse two. Perhaps the difficulty is overstated, and any strangeness in appearance could be attributed to the irregularities of Hebrew poetic forms. Likewise, as with Psalm 42, an understanding of the living God as One who is present, involved, and active in the lives of His people makes perfect sense in the context.

*Jer. 10:10*²³ “*He is the living God.*” The declaration of this attribute of God comes in the context of pointing out the foolishness of worshipping idols who can do nothing. In contrast, God’s actions are seen in creation (11-13), on the earth (13), and in the Lord’s battling as Lord of armies (vs. 16-18). This is quite the contrast between the God who exists vs. the non-existent idols, the acts of God vs. the inaction of the idols, the one true Creator vs. the idols created by men, the Lord of armies vs. idols who would be destroyed. In the immediate verse the earth is seen quaking at His wrath, and the nations are not able to endure His indignation. Thus God’s direct involvement in the affairs of the world—which no one can withstand— is seen in the context of His judgment. This is contrasted sharply with the complete inactivity and inability of the idols.²⁴

*Jer. 23:36*²⁵ “*words of the living God*” God sets Himself as directly opposed to the false prophets and evil leaders of Israel. They were saying God had said things that He had not said. He warns them that they have done this to the living God, the God of armies, and therefore God would remove His presence from them (39-40), and utterly punish them (14-15, 19-20, 34). Thus

²³ BHS: יהוה-אלהים חיים (MP) LXX: Does not contain this verse.

²⁴ “In contrast to the idols, the Lord is the ‘living’ God, the everlasting King. The idol-gods can only shake the earth by falling over, but they are prevented from falling by being nailed down. The earth, however, shakes at the wrath of the Lord, and the nations shake at his anger.” Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, vol. 26 of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco, TX: Word, 1991), 159.

²⁵ BHS: אלהים חיים (MP) LXX: Does not contain this section of this verse.

God's direct involvement in the affairs of men is seen in the context of His military and temporal judgment (vs. 39).²⁶

*Dan. 6:20*²⁷ “*servant of the living God*” Here Darius anxiously inquires whether Daniel has miraculously survived the night in the lions’ den. The implication seems to be that if Daniel is still alive it must be through the hands of a God active in time and place to preserve his life.²⁸

*Dan. 6:26*²⁹ “*He is the living God.*” This declaration about the nature of God by Darius, the king of Babylon, to all his subjects recognizes God’s sovereign and active role in the affairs of mankind. None else but a directly involved God could have rescued Daniel, hence the people must know and reverence Him. Thus God’s direct supernatural involvement in the affairs of men is again in view. No military conflict is seen, however it is in the context of Daniel being opposed by rival leaders wanting to see him dead and gone. A contrast with dead idols may be present by implication (“Not all gods are like this one!”), but more directly the emphasis the text makes is that this living God delivered Daniel from a humanly impossible situation (6:20, 22, 27).³⁰

²⁶ A number of commentators surveyed on this passage did not have much to say about the use of living God here, or they simply referenced one to their comments on Jer. 10:10. Jean Calvin (*Jeremiah 20-47*, vol. 10 of Calvin’s Commentaries, trans. and ed. John Owen [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999], 213-14.) however addresses this passage without importing the context of the earlier passage as he notes, “By this term he reminded them that the ungodly, who vomited thus their blasphemies against him, would not go unpunished; ‘See,’ he says, ‘with whom ye have to do; for you contend with the living God; this audacity will rebound on your own heads; ye then carry on a fatal war.’”

²⁷ BHS(Arm): ܢܫܝܢ ܢܫܝܢܝܢ (MS) LXX(TH): τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος (Def/Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

²⁸ See the discussion of Daniel 6:26 for a fuller discussion of the context.

²⁹ BHS(Arm): ܢܫܝܢ ܢܫܝܢܝܢ (MS) LXX: θεὸς ζῶν (Pres/Act/Part/Nom/MS)

³⁰ John E. Goldingay (*Daniel*, vol. 30 of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1989], 133-35.) astutely notes in his commentary on this whole passage that “This rich OT title for God suggests not merely that God is alive rather than dead, but that he is active and powerful, awesome and almighty, involved in bringing judgment and blessing. It is appealed to when human beings are inclined to slight him or to doubt him in situations of pressure and weakness.... To be living is to be active and powerful: the living God is enthroned as King forever (Ps. 10:16; 29:10), and he can therefore also be his people’s savior.”

*Hos. 1:10*³¹ “*Children of the living God*” In this context, after judging Israel so that they were cast off (vs. 4-6, 9-10), God would rescue them and they would again be known as “children of the living God.” God’s direct intervention on their behalf (and the way that He did it supernaturally, cf. 1:7) would cause them to again be known as the people of the mightily acting God. Thus there is direct supernatural involvement in the context of military conflicts with oppressing nations. This takes place within the overall sphere of God judging His idolatrous people.³²

III. New Testament, Fifteen References

*Matt. 16:16*³³ “*the Son of the living God*” This use of the living God is the identification of who Jesus is by Peter. This identification sets Jesus apart from all the prophets, and comes right before Jesus’ pronouncement that He would build His church and not even the gates of hell would prevail against it. God is proclaimed to be directly and powerfully active to bring true life in the lives of men through Jesus, and would be in the future through Peter and the rest of the

³¹ BHS: יְהוָה־לֵּחַ (MS) LXX: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

³² Douglas Stuart (*Hosea-Jonah*, vol. 31 of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 38.), with the “living God” expression, brings in a comparison with the Isaianic “idol passages.” In the overall context of Israel’s idolatry this makes sense (1:2, whoredom). A. A. Macintosh (*Hosea*, The International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997], 36.) notes this but goes one step further: “The term ‘living God’ is likely specifically to denote Yahweh in contradistinction to false gods (so Kimchi) and to emphasize his effective reality (cf. 1 Sam 17:26; Ps 42:3; 84:3). The complete expression ‘sons of the living God’ constitutes an instructive, carefully contrived antithesis to ‘Not-my-people’ (1.9) and suggests that, restored to the covenant relationship, Israel will be infused with life by the author of life and hence will be blessed with fertility and strength (cf. 6:2).” God’s “effective reality” is His direct involvement (1:7) within the affairs of men which proves the difference between the idols and the true God (implicitly in this context since no direct statements of contrast are made).

³³ NA27: τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος (Def/Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

disciples (cf. 16:21, 25-28). Thus here can be seen God's direct power manifest in the physical world.³⁴

*Matt. 26:63*³⁵ “*I adjure thee by the living God*” Here the High Priest is putting Jesus under oath, by the God who lives and acts, to tell the truth in response to the question he is about to ask. By this he would be invoking the curse and judgment of God upon Jesus if He answered falsely. Thus in this use there is expressed the desire and belief that God would intervene directly to bring judgment if necessary (or at least the calling upon God to do so). It is also definitely possible within this statement that there is a calling attention to God as being the true God. This also would only increase the necessity of speaking the truth, for the true God would surely judge any falsehood (whether now or in the resurrection).³⁶

*John 6:69*³⁷ “*the Son of the living God*” (*KJV*) This would be the same situation as Matthew 16:16 above. However, it is believed by NET, NASB, ESV, NIV and NA27 to be a conflated addition (to which this writer agrees) from the Matthew text that was not original in

³⁴ Donald A. Hagner (*Matthew 14-28*, vol. 33b of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1995], 469.) says this term, “describes the true God, as opposed to the gods of the world who were not alive....Implied in the phrase (but only implied) is the fact that God is uniquely the source of all life.” This is directly contra W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr. (*The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, The International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991], 2: 620-21.). However, perhaps the difference could be resolved by noting that both the contrast of God with dead idols, as well as the idea of God being the source of life are implications resulting from God's incarnational intervention by which He is directly and powerfully active.

³⁵ NA27: τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος (Def/Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

³⁶ Hagner (*Matthew 14-28*, 799) sees this as similar to the Matthew 16:16 usage with the emphasis being on the contrast between the one true God and idols (as would be expected for consistency). Likewise, as noted above in fn. thirty-four, and in the prior OT usages, this may be included but often is not the most emphasized aspect of this expression.

³⁷ NA27: Absent. BYZ: τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος (Def/Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

John.³⁸ If it was originally included in this gospel, different details are emphasized. In John it occurs right after Jesus fed the 5,000 in a vivid display of the power of God in the lives of people. Thus the pronouncement here would no doubt be a reflection of what they had seen in the exercise of the power of God through Jesus.³⁹

*Acts 14:15*⁴⁰ “turn from these vain things to a living God” In this occasion Paul is trying to persuade the people not to worship him and Silas for the miracle worked through them. He wants them to worship the true God. Indeed, the living God is the one creator of all who had not left Himself without witness among them. This is quite a contrast to empty, inactive, uninvolved idols. Thus here the “living God” expresses the truth that God does the miraculous, is involved in history and nature, and is therefore true and real as compared to lifeless idols.⁴¹

*Rom. 9:26*⁴² “sons of the living God” This is a quote of Hosea 1:10 (see above) where God in His divine intervention disciplines Israel, but then eventually brings them back in His faithfulness in a way that causes them to be seen as the sons of the living God. In this passage in Romans Paul applies this also to the inclusion of Gentiles within the plan of God. Here Paul is discussing the sovereignty of God, His choice for redemption of some, and His judgment of

³⁸ John 6:69, *New Testament: New English Translation, Novum Testamentum Graece*, NA 27th ed. NET Bible and notes eds., Michael H. Burer, W. Hall Harris III, and Daniel B. Wallace (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), 269n1tc, 839.

³⁹ Since this phrase is not usually considered a part of the original text most commentators do not discuss it. However the prior discussion under Matt. 16:16 would essentially apply here also.

⁴⁰ NA27: θεὸν ζῶντα (Pres/Act/Part/Acc/MS)

⁴¹ Darrell L. Bock (*Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 478.) agrees that here this expression points out the contrast between the “living God” and the implied “dead” idols.”

⁴² NA27: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

others. Thus to be the sons of the living God is to be related to the God who is active in history bringing people to Himself and judging others for His glory and righteousness.⁴³

*2 Cor. 3:3*⁴⁴ “*Spirit of the living God*” Paul is testifying that it was the Spirit of the living God who changed the Corinthians’ lives and who is therefore a testimony of Paul’s apostleship. The gospel that brought life to them, though, was an aroma of death to those who were perishing (2:15). The glory of this ministry of the Spirit is even greater than that which made Moses veil his face (3:7-12). The intervention of God in the lives of these people that resulted in their salvation and transformation is the occasion of this use and brings great freedom, however it also has the portent of judgment for those who are blinded and hardened. Thus this use primarily focuses on God’s positive direct intervention (in the incarnation, gospel, and the Spirit), but also contains the shadow of God’s justice and judgment.⁴⁵

*2 Cor. 6:16*⁴⁶ “*temple of the living God*” The living God here is used to drive home the point of the seriousness of the believers’ consorting with the world. Believers are the temple of the one true, almighty God who dwells and walks among His people who have been made His sons and daughters. Thus they are to be separate from sinfulness and wrong interrelationships.

⁴³ James D. G. Dunn (*Romans 9-16*, vol. 38b of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1988], 572.) interestingly argues, in addition to seeing the contrast between dead idols and the living God, that the strongest emphasis in the text is the contrast between those who were not the people of God becoming the “sons of the living God.” This fits in quite strongly with the theme of God’s action and involvement in relation to mankind in this expression.

⁴⁴ NA27: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

⁴⁵ Ralph P. Martin (*2 Corinthians*, vol. 40 of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1986], 52.) notes that this phrase is probably a reference to Ex. 31:18, but “the most striking change is that ‘with the finger of God’ becomes ‘by the Spirit of the Living God,’ in turn an exceptional title—found only here in the Bible—for the Holy Spirit.” This use has no contrast with idols in the context, but rather completely focuses its energies on expressing that this was a direct work of God in His involvements with man just like the giving of the law to Moses.

⁴⁶ NA27: θεοῦ (ἐσμεν) ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

Lack of repentance leads to death (7:10) and the judgment seat of Christ (5:10). Thus in this case God's direct involvement in the world is seen in His working through His temple (believers). They must take that role seriously else they experience His judgment in this life and the repercussions (loss of rewards) even in the life to come.⁴⁷

*1 Thess. 1:9*⁴⁸ “to serve the living and true God” The Thessalonians had turned from the false idols to the living and true God. The contrast is between the idols and God, and between their old lives and the radically transformed lives they had now as a result of God's intervention. Serving the living God can be seen in the next verse to be tied to waiting for Jesus' return. Jesus was physically raised from the dead here on earth, and will deliver believers from God's judgment on this world at the end of time. Thus this expression here is in the context of contrasting the powerless idols with God's direct intervention in Jesus in the past (and the resulting deliverance, still being played out, both spiritually and physically in the lives of the Thessalonians), and His judgment of the world in the future.⁴⁹

*1 Tim. 3:15*⁵⁰ “church of the living God” The context here is Paul teaching Timothy what order in the family and church is supposed to look like. It is a serious issue that believers conduct

⁴⁷ Martin (2 Corinthians, 203) interestingly points out that, “the living God, the one who provides the only way to life—through rebirth—is in Paul's mind and is conveyed by a favorite element of his apostolic teaching, namely the temple-concept.” Thus the living God here brings new life at salvation, but with the indwelling of them as His temple is also active within their lives. Thus with His very presence active among them, there is great impetus for separation from sin and for walking faithfully with their “father”—as God's intervention in the history of Israel exemplifies.

⁴⁸ NA27: θεῶν ζῶντι (Pres/Act/Part/Dat/MS)

⁴⁹ Gordon D. Fee (*The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009], 47-51.) strongly points out the contrast made between the false, powerless idols and the true living God, but what is also very helpful is how he points out from the text *how* the living God is seen in action in the text—resurrection, Jesus' deliverance from the wrath to come/judgment on opponents (as has been pointed out above).

⁵⁰ NA27: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

themselves rightly in the household of God because it is also the church of the living God. The importance of this exhortation is highlighted by this expression because it reflects the character of the one true God who is very involved in man's existence through the incarnation (vs. 16).

Thus this usage seems to have as its reference God's direct involvement.⁵¹

*1 Tim. 4:10*⁵² “*hope set on the living God*” The living God is here identified as the savior of all people, especially those who believe. The hope, assurance, and faith of believers is that God has intervened in time and space on the behalf of people. Thus it is used most clearly in reference to God's direct intervention in history. It is possible there is the hint of God's judgment and discipline in the world since there is in the overall context a warning of those who will depart from the faith (vs. 1), and the commands to let no one despise Timothy's youthfulness (vs. 12), to not neglect his gift (vs. 14), and to keep a close watch on himself (vs. 16).⁵³

*Heb. 3:12*⁵⁴ “*fall away from the living God*” The Jewish believers are being challenged to not fall away from God. The picture of God that is given to them—as a reminder of the God they are serving—is the God who led Israel in the wilderness and punished those who rebelled. This

⁵¹ George W. Knight III (*The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992], 203.) sees the meaning of this phrase for believers in that, “ζῶν emphasizes that God is the only God and is himself the source of life. In this Epistle the emphasis on God's “immortality” in 1:17 and 6:16, coupled in both instances with the concept “one,” affirms this truth in other words (cf. Jn. 5:26).” To pull this meaning in the context from so far away seems a bit of a stretch though, as I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner (*The Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999], 509.) acknowledge, “It is difficult to tell if θεοῦ ζῶντος bears any special force here...and it is thus more likely that ‘living God’ simply emphasises God's presence with his people.” More than just God's general presence though, the context in the following verse with the incarnation seems to carry the weight towards the idea of God's massively active presence with mankind.

⁵² NA27: θεῶ ζῶντι (Pres/Act/Part/Dat/MS)

⁵³ Knight (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 203) “they may place their hope on ‘the living God’ because as such he is the source and giver of life and is able to fulfill the promise of ζωῆ (cf. especially 1:16, 17).” Not only is God the source and giver of life, but as the *active* living God (seen in His saving in this verse), He can be trusted to continue intervening and bring about the promised end.

⁵⁴ NA27: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

is a picture of God being very active in the lives of His followers to provide, but then also to (as highlighted most prominently here) discipline those who rebelled. It also could be pointing out what falling away *from* God is falling away *to*: powerless idolatry, or a way of life that leads to death. Thus God's direct involvement is evidenced in the prospect of His judgment and discipline.⁵⁵

*Heb. 9:14*⁵⁶ “*to serve the living God*” The work of Christ purifies believers from a conscience of dead works to serving the living God. God's intervention through Jesus allows relationship with God to be had in full redemption and propitiation from the transgressions revealed by the Mosaic covenant. Thus in this usage God is directly intervening in human history both in judgment (of Jesus on our behalf) but also in mercy which allows even more direct contact in the realm of positive service (as opposed to the dead works prior).⁵⁷

*Heb. 10:31*⁵⁸ “*hands of the living God*” This is a warning of the judgment, punishment, or discipline that will come upon those who profane the blood of Jesus' sacrifice. Whether to

⁵⁵ William L. Lane (*Hebrews 1-8*, vol. 47a of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1991], 86. connects “turning away from the living God” as being an Old Testament way of saying “their hearts are always going astray” or “an evil unbelieving heart.” He does not elaborate on what ideas that brings in, however David L. Allen (*Hebrews*, vol. 35 of The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen [Nashville, TN: B. & H. Publishing Group, 2010], 262.) captures it well: “The author warned his readers not to turn away from ‘the living God.’ The absence of the Greek articles in this phrase focuses on God’s *character and nature*. Westcott translated it ‘from Him who is a living God’ because of the anarthrous construction, and he explained that the phrase suggests ‘the certainty of retribution on unfaithfulness.’” (Emphasis added.) The use of this expression here is a strong warning about the intervention of God in their circumstances if they go this route.

⁵⁶ NA27: θεῷ ζῶντι (Pres/Act/Part/Dat/MS)

⁵⁷ Lane (*Hebrews 9-13*, vol. 47b of Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Waco, TX: Word, 1991], 241.) agrees, “The purpose clause εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι, ‘so that we may worship the living God,’ has been formulated in antithesis to v 9, where the writer stressed the inability of the old cultus to provide τὸν λατρεύοντα, ‘the worshiper,’ with the needed purgation of conscience. The point is clear. The sacrifice that inaugurated the new covenant achieved the cleansing of the conscience that all worshipers lacked under the former covenant and that all had sought through prescribed gifts and offerings.”

⁵⁸ NA27: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

believers or unbelievers, this has strong reference to God showing Himself strong against these individuals. Thus God will be directly involved in bringing forth His judgment.⁵⁹

*Heb. 12:22*⁶⁰ “city of the living God” This reference is also in the context of a warning. Before it is the example of the giving of the law with the mountain on fire (the scene of Deuteronomy 5:26 which was the very first use of this expression). After it is the challenge not to refuse God’s Word since those warned on earth previously did not escape if they did. Within it, though, is also the idea of having entered into fellowship with God *now* with even greater relationship anticipated in the *future*. Both of these are to have impact on present life. Thus overall “living God” here can be seen to include the idea of God’s direct involvement in the negative warning of His judgment, but also the positive idea of current interactive relationship with Him.⁶¹

*Rev. 7:2*⁶² “the seal of the living God” Here the living God directly intervenes in the affairs of men to seal the 144,000 to protect them from harm. God is in the midst of judging the

⁵⁹ Allen (*Hebrews*, 527) notes the difference between this use and the one in 3:12, “Interestingly, in 3:12, what is to be feared is turning away from God; here it is falling into his hands which should be feared.” Lane (*Hebrews 9-13*, 296) reiterates that the focus is on God’s action in this phrase, “The final statement thus affirms the magnitude of the sin of apostasy and of the impending judgment from which there is no escape. It reflects a profound conviction of the awesome majesty and holiness of the living God (cf. F. F. Bruce, 263-64).”

⁶⁰ NA27: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

⁶¹ Allen (*Hebrews*, 590) helpfully observes the relationship aspect, “The perfect tense of the verb implies that the readers are converted and have entered a permanent place of eternal relationship with God.” Lane (*Hebrews 9-13*, 296) nicely captures the active aspect of that relationship, “The genitive θεοῦ ζῶντος recalls the use of this terminology earlier in the homily when the writer warned of the peril of apostasy from ‘the living God’ (3:12; 10:31). The God whom the apathetic members of the house church serve is alive and powerful and is accessible to them. It is to his city they have come.”

⁶² NA27: θεοῦ ζῶντος (Pres/Act/Part/Gen/MS)

earth, but these are protected from that in God's sovereignty. Thus this has the context of God's direct intervention to shield those sealed while also bringing His judgment upon earth.⁶³

IV. Determination of Categories of Meanings

Examining all of these usages reveals one overarching dominant theme. Within that theme there are some other interesting elements that can be seen and should be noted.

The direct intervention of God within the activity of men is referenced in every case.⁶⁴ There is either the direct intervention of God within the context (OT: Josh. 3:10, Dan. 6:20, Dan. 6:26) (NT: Matt. 16:16a, John 6:69, Acts 14:15, 2 Cor. 3:3, 2 Cor. 6:16a, 1 Thess. 1:9a, 1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Tim. 4:10, Heb. 3:12a, Heb. 9:14, Heb. 12:22a), the prayer for that kind of intervention (OT: 2 Kings 19:4, 2 Kings 19:16, Ps. 42:2, Ps. 84:2, Is. 37:4, Is. 37:17) (NT: Matt. 26:63), the confidence/fear that God will intervene (OT: Deut. 5:26, 1 Sam. 17:26, 1 Sam. 17:36), or the promise that He will intervene (OT: Jer. 10:10, Jer. 23:36, Hos. 1:10) (NT: Matt. 16:16b, Rom. 9:26, 2 Cor. 6:16b, 1 Thess. 1:9b, Heb. 3:12b, Heb. 10:31, Heb. 12:22b, Rev. 7:2).⁶⁵

⁶³ G. K. Beale (*The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999], 408.) also notes the activity inherent in this context, "What follows in 7:2 is sufficient to demonstrate that this angel is a harbinger of grace, since he has the 'seal of the living God.' He commands the four angels not to harm the earth until God's servants are sealed. The four angels have been empowered by God to cause tribulation on the earth by means of the four horsemen..."

⁶⁴ P. Kyle McCarter Jr. (*I Samuel*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980], 293.) sees this when he says that the living God is, "always used to stress the reality and effectiveness of the god of Israel (Deut 5:26 and esp, Jer 10:10) and most often, as in the present passage [1 Sam. 17:36], to censure those who would dare to mock or otherwise revile Yahweh (II Kings 19:4, 16 = Isa 37:4, 17; Jer 23:36...)"

⁶⁵ R. T. France (*The Living God* [London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970], 24) captures this quite well, "A living relationship with the living God. That is Christianity; that is the heart of true religion. Christians are 'the temple of the living God' (2 Cor. 6:16), their very life derived through Christ from 'the living Father' (Jn. 6:57; cf. 5:26), and the undeniable reality of the change in their lives witnessing to the work of 'the Spirit of the living God' in them (2 Cor. 3:3); they press on undaunted by opposition and discouragement, because they have their 'hope set on the living God' (1 Tim. 4:10), and because He is the living God their hope is not disappointed. These few uses of the term 'the living God' are some visible outcrops of a stratum running richly through the whole of the New Testament, the conviction that God not only 'is', but 'lives', in dynamic and irresistible power, and in such a person-to-person relationship with His people that there is no room for idolatry or formal 'religion'."

This activity within the realm of man always has to do with God's activity in time, not in eternity. In other words His supernatural activity, judgment, or deliverance always has physical life in view. The only exception might be in Hebrews (some might argue), but that seems highly unlikely considering all of the other usages. This could have particular relevance in determining to whom the author was speaking (whether just believers or both believers and unbelievers), and thus these passages should be re-examined in light of this study. A possible conclusion that this seems to support (that would need to be verified or discounted by further study of that subject) could be very well that while some of the warning passages in Hebrews might sound eerily like hell-fire judgment, it would seem to be the case rather that the author is trying to make the very strong and vivid point (as an eloquent and truthful preacher would) that the punishing hand of God upon those who forsake Him and trample underfoot His blood-bought gracious gift will suffer such a fate that they would wish they were in hell. The weight of the historical example of God's punishment and discipline is to scare the believer out of even the thought of going in those sinful directions as one gets a glimpse of the fearsomeness of God in His hatred and judgment of sin as the "living God."

In many of the cases God's activity in relation to man is in the form of judgment of one group or person while delivering another (OT: Josh. 3:10, 1 Sam. 17:26, 1 Sam. 17:36, 2 Kings 19:4, 2 Kings 19:16, Ps. 42:2, Ps. 84:2, Is. 37:4, Is. 37:17, Dan. 6:20, Dan. 6:26, Hos. 1:10) (NT: Rom. 9:26, 2 Cor. 3:3, 1 Thess. 1:9, Rev. 7:2). This includes most of the Old Testament references (minus the leaders of Israel at Sinai, and a couple references to judgment by God upon Israel in Jeremiah) as well as the New Testament ones where God's activity is seen in the overarching discussion of God's sovereignty in Romans 9 (it is admitted that to some this

reference to judgment might be too far out of the context to be included here), in some cases where God's deliverance of believers also includes references in the context to God's current judgment of unbelievers in their present blindness, and in one final case where God's protection of the 144,000 is concurrent with His temporal wrath being poured out on unbelievers.

Often the intervention is in the form of the supernatural activity of God among mankind (OT: Deut. 5:26, Josh. 3:10, 2 Kings 19:16, Is. 37:17, Dan. 6:20, Dan. 6:26, Hos. 1:10) (NT: Matt. 16:16, John 6:69, Acts 14:15, 2 Cor. 3:3, 2 Cor. 6:16, 1 Thess. 1:9, 1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Tim. 4:10, Heb. 3:12, Heb. 9:14, Heb. 12:22). Examples include the hypothetical judgment at Sinai, the parting of the Jordan and the destruction of the Canaanites, the slaying of the 185,000 Assyrians by the Angel of the Lord, Daniel's rescue from the lions' den, the way God will bring Israel back to Himself, the incarnation, healing a cripple, the transformation of lives, God's discipline of Israel in the wilderness, and God's future miraculous protection of the 144,000.

The active involvement of God with humanity is often explicitly contrasted with the inactivity and deadness of idols (OT: 2 Kings 19:4, 16, Is. 37:4, 17, Jer. 10:10) (NT: Acts 14:15, 2 Cor. 6:16, 1 Thess. 1:9). It is probably also implied a number of other times (OT: 1 Sam 17:26, 36, Dan. 6:20, 26, Hos. 1:10) (NT: Matt. 16:16, 26:63, Rom. 9:26). In the Old Testament this is seen most clearly in the references to Hezekiah and Sennacherib's boasting, as well as the familiar Jeremiah narrative against the vanity of the idol made by men that cannot move, speak, do good, or evil. In the New Testament it is seen most clearly when Paul contrasts the idols with the miracle he had just done by the power of the true God, and also in the transformation away from idols that should/does (Corinthians/Thessalonians respectively) occur within the lives of people when they become the children of God. This use is really an implication that flows out of

the above aspect of God's direct involvement in the affairs of mankind. It is an important use, but since it is not universally present should not be allowed to overtake the primary emphasis of this expression (as sometimes occurs within the writings of commentators and preachers).

A number of cases (OT: 1 Sam. 17:26, 1 Sam. 17:36, 2 Kings 19:4, 2 Kings 19:16, Ps. 42:2, Is. 37:4, Is. 37:17) use the same Hebrew word for "mock" or "defy" which highlights the actions of enemies against God. God's response in turn (actual or requested) was to judge them in an expression of His being the living God. This is found in the case of David and Goliath, Hezekiah and Sennacherib, and the Psalmist desiring deliverance.

Often the uses in the New Testament have to do with God's intervention within the incarnation, either in and of itself or in conjunction with the relationship that believers now have with this hands-on God (NT: Matt. 16:16, John 6:69, Rom. 9:26, 2 Cor. 3:3, 1 Thess. 1:9, 1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Tim. 4:10, Heb. 10:31). The incarnation is the biggest and most impactful involvement by God ever seen in human history up until when He pours out His wrath and judges the whole cosmos at the end of time. This interruption of life allowed people to become the sons and servants of the living God in a closer way than ever before. For indeed now they became His temple—indwelt by this almighty, supernatural, directly involved, sin-judging, deliverer God.

Another dominant usage in the New Testament has to do with the warning and promise to believers of God's intervention and discipline if they profane the name of the living God within their lives (NT: 2 Cor. 6:16, Heb. 3:12, Heb. 10:31, Heb. 12:22). This warning can be seen once with the Corinthians misusing their bodies as God's temples, and three times with the recipients

of Hebrews who were being tempted to fall back into Judaism to avoid their trials and persecutions.

Having made these observations, the summation of the above passages can be seen. The “living God” refers to God being directly involved within the sphere of human life before the ending of all things. This involvement often includes, sometimes simultaneously, God’s judgment upon evildoers and His deliverance of those walking in His way. These involvements are often supernatural in form, though He does also use the natural processes and people of this world to accomplish them. Likewise, this involvement of God found through this expression often explicitly or implicitly points out the contrast between God and lifeless idols. Meanwhile, the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the subsequent miraculous life-transforming work of the Spirit to bring people into relationship with God form the largest expression of this term in the New Testament. However, a significant expression of it in the New Testament also comes in the warning of God’s intervention in this life (at times in a teeth-shattering way) to bring discipline upon His erring people.

V. Conclusions

In the thirty times that the expression the “living God” is found in the Bible, it has been seen to have a consistent meaning. The “living God” is the one who is directly involved in the lives of people within time in a real transformative way by the exercise of His power. Ways may vary, but the power of God and His involvement are constant.

Having observed this consistent meaning of the “living God,” the various ways it is used were then seen. These ways include supernatural intervention, contrast against idols, judgment

upon enemies of God, deliverance, the incarnation and new relationship to God, and discipline upon God's people.

The relevance of this study is found to be primarily in the realm of elevating one's view of God to the reality and awesomeness of God's power and involvement with mankind. This reality is brought strikingly home into the core of one's being when one sees oneself as indeed being the son, daughter, servant, and temple of this living God. Many subsequent applications can flow from this realization including a revitalized prayer life with God, a renewed confidence in God, an extreme reticence to walking in rebellion with unconfessed sin against God, and a rejuvenated desire to joyfully serve God. Secondly, this study has also shown that this expression may have relevance in adding further light to some of the warning passages of Hebrews and their intended recipients. Since three of the four are clearly to believers, perhaps that is another indication the fourth is also.

VI. Applications

A. How This Should Affect One's View of God

God is a God of direct intervention in this life. It is right to view God as high and lifted up, as beyond one's comprehension, as inhabiting the vastness of the unknown universes, but one must also not forget that He is the God who is close and involved. He is not a distant watchmaker who set things up and has left them to wind down. God is intimately involved with the lives of His people.

God answers prayers and sometimes works quite supernaturally in this life. Since God is the living God, and He can be seen to work mightily in the pages of scripture, His followers can bring the injustices, the pains, the burdens, the hurts, the situations where people mock Him—and everything else—all to Him. In this process they can know that He will, at the discretion of His sovereignty, act mightily in this life to deal with them. Indeed, God still works supernaturally and answers prayers.

God judges evil in this life. While God has not said that He will judge every evil as it deserves within the experiences of this life, He does allow natural consequences to fall, and He does intervene at times to bring specific judgment upon the evil actions of men. Christians should look for these judgments and let those pictures remind them of the full coming judgment. Meanwhile those judgments should also be a call to them and others to cast themselves upon the grace of God in repentance. God still hates evil and is doing things about it.

God disciplines those who are His in this life. God does not take lightly those who are called by His name who despise His grace and disgrace His name instead of being the light of the world. God took the issue very seriously with the Israelites in the wilderness wandering, and later with the nation's treatment of His temple in Jerusalem. He takes it at least just as seriously with Christians in their pilgrim wanderings, and in their treatment of their lives as His current temples throughout the world. God still loves His people enough to discipline them.

This God that is seen working mightily to intervene supernaturally and by directing events in past history, who slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night, who became incarnate in Jesus to deliver His people from sin is now indwelling them as His temple on earth. This is happening

in the very life that they are living here and now in the seeming mundane-ness of existence in Dallas, Texas; Satsuma, Florida; Grand Rapids, Minnesota; Langhorne, Pennsylvania or anywhere else. Believers are in close communion and relationship with Him as His servants, as His very sons and daughters. Thus they have the closest relationship with God ever seen in history up to this point!

B. How This Should Affect One's Life

Because God answers prayer, still works supernaturally, and is directly involved in Christians' lives in a near way, they should pray confidently with that in mind. They should pray that God work for His glory in their lives both through quieter and "more natural" ways as well as through supernatural ways. God will sometimes choose to work supernaturally. When He does not answer that way, they can and should still be encouraged by the reminder of the true nature and power of the God they serve as they confess it by their prayers of faith. Likewise, when they are confronted with God's name being defied in the world by people around them, they are fully appropriate and justified in praying that He would intervene directly.

Since God judges evil and gives glimpses of His vengeance against it, believers should trust that nothing is beyond His power, and that He will act in time and space when He deems it right, necessary, and best in the way that He knows to be most appropriate. Concurrently, hearing about Him working mightily in judgment in the past and at times in the present should give them assurance that He will also judge everything at the end of time.

Because of God's active involvement against those who mock Him, and against those among His followers who disgrace His name, His children should be fearful of rebellion against

Him. The warnings and stories of scripture should cause them to exercise the utmost care to immediately deal with any sin in their lives. God is not a graceless God just waiting to smash His people. However, for those who despise His grace, He lovingly does whatever is necessary to bring them back to repentance (which is best for them), and to safeguard the glory of His name.

Being the temple of God in the world today should cause believers to live with the utmost joy in a way that brings honor to their deserving King. He has specially honored them to allow them to serve Him in this way, and it should fill them with love, awe, excitement, and an appropriate godly fear as they proceed as His representatives to the world.

No doubt more ways could be expressed by which this concept should change and influence one's perspective, and how this concept should be applied in concrete ways to one's life. However they are probably sufficient to nudge one in the proper direction where one needs to change one's viewpoint or way of life. The only question remains is will one take the time to meditate upon these things and do the work necessary to make this study a worthwhile read?

Thus this expression the "living God" has potentially fruitful application in understanding scripture, understanding God, and in living out faith in this life. May the fruit of this study challenge, convict, and encourage each one's heart to the glory of God.

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