

El Chay—The Living God

I. Greeting and Introduction

Today we get to talk about El Chay—the Living God.

As I considered this name, it seemed to me that we could have spent the whole year on this name—the reality and beauty of God as the living God stretches from the first chapter of the Bible all the way through to the very last. You could argue that life is the theme of the entire bible. God the living God. And the struggle between life and death that is the story of life on earth. It's just massive.

So today, we'll start with our story of Hezekiah. Then we'll take a quick tour of the bible with eyes to see God as the Living God.

And then we'll consider what that means for us this morning and do a prayer exercise today with His word that is alive because His spirit is alive with us.

II. 2 Kings 19. Hezekiah

If you've done the workbook, you know that our name comes from 2 Kings 19 when Hezekiah is facing the king of Assyria –Sennacharib.

His troops have been enduring a verbal assault by the messengers from Assyria
—don't let Hezekiah trick you—don't listen to him.

--don't trust in God, that's foolishness!

none of the gods of the other nations we have attacked have done them any good!

Hezekiah sends word to Isaiah and he also prays to God

He prays, "O Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O Lord our god, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone. (2 Kings 19:15-19).

And the Lord answered. He sent “the angel of the Lord” into the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 of the warriors.

So Sennacherib “departed and went home.”

The other nations choose their dead idols and Hezekiah is choosing his living God. And God—the living God—the only God—delivers Jerusalem.

III. Themes

So notice the mockery and lies. The last time we talked about Jehovah Shalom, the Lord is peace. And we talked about how to combat lies with the truth of God’s word.

So here again God’s people are faced with a terrifying situation. They have to choose if they will trust God—and it’s a life and death choice.

And the enemy is there to mock them and their God: “don’t trust Hezekiah and his nothing-God.” God will not save you. The enemy wants them to give themselves to slavery to Assyria to save their lives.

And haven’t you heard that chilling whisper in your own heart?

When I was a 13, one of my mom’s sisters and her daughter were murdered by her husband, and when I was 15 another of my mom’s sister’s died of pneumonia, leaving her two tiny children behind.

I heard the enemy’s chilling whisper to my heart—they trusted Jesus and look where it got them. God will not protect you. Don’t trust him.

It took me 20 years to heal from those lies. But because Jesus is the living God, I did experience a healing from those dark lies.

So hang on to the themes of mockery/lies, death and life, and choices.

Because here is today’s big idea:

“God is the living God. We choose life when we choose him, and that life is in fellowship with him.”

IV. Bible Tour
A. Genesis

God is author of life—all the earth and sea teeming with life and mankind in the center of it to represent God. Here is a picture of LIFE with all caps:

Adam and Eve live in unfiltered fellowship with God and with one another. They are so free, they don't even need clothes.

But a “mocker” shows up—a liar casting doubt on God's goodness. Did God really say . . . Don't trust him, the snake says, he's holding out on you.

So Adam and Eve have a choice, God had told them not to eat from the tree, or “dying, they would die.”

They choose.

And they choose death.

And notice, in the story, it's not a punishment God inflicts on them.

Let's read what it says:

“Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—’ Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”
Genesis 3:22-23.

The fact that they will die means simply that they are separated from the tree of life—this will keep them from eating from the tree of life and living forever in their fallen state . . .

God doesn't even finish the sentence—it's as if the thought of man living forever in sin is a thought too terrible to contemplate. Just think what mankind could do if we lived forever as we are—Hitler. Suffering. Torture. Sickness. We would turn to earth to hell.

Seen this way, the fact that mankind die is God's mercy to us. It limits evil and prevent earth from becoming hell.

B. Moses

Now Moses rescues the people from slavery and receives the 10 commandments. The people have the promised land in front of them – a type for Paradise—a land flowing with milk and honey.

God has shown himself to be to them the living God. He parted the red sea and drowned the Egyptian army.

He puts the choice to them “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil . . . I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days,” Deuteronomy 30: 15, 19-20.

They choose life, but not really.

On the border of the promised land, their faith fails them and they won’t go. That generation wanders in the desert until they are all dead and their children go in instead.

C. Jesus

Jesus comes to us as the Living One. Let’s look at his story for just a moment from this vantage point of God being the Living God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,” John 1:1-5.

So Jesus is the word that was, as Peter later calls him “The Author of life.” –all the fish and birds and trees and stars and every man and woman derive their life from Jesus.

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together,” Colossians 1:16-17.

He holds all things together—he keeps your body from spinning apart!

He is the living God. And all life comes from him.

And he came to give us life:

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly,” John 10:10.

He warns the Pharisees, “You refuse to come to me that you may have life,” John 5:40.

And he says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,” John 3:16.

Jesus came to win a people from death to life.

There are so many verses to read about this that we could be here all day!

You can pick almost any NT book and read it for the themes of life!

God is the living God; he is the God of life.

And that’s why death could not hold Jesus:

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen!” Luke 24:5.

And that’s why he could say to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:25.

And then raise Lazarus from the dead.

He is the living God. And he offers us nothing less than Eternal Life.

So, I told you this theme runs from the first chapter of the Bible to the last—
Let’s look at Revelation 22

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with it’s twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations,” Revelation 22:1-2.

What Jesus has done is to open the way for us through his death and resurrection to the tree of life—we will be cleansed by his righteousness, actually made one with him, and from that oneness with Jesus we will eat from the tree and live forever where

“They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light,” Rev 22:4.

The Living God will come for us and make us alive with him forever! This is the gospel, friends.

“I pray for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me,” John 17:20-22

The Living God has come for us to make us alive with him forever!

This is the gospel, friends.

And now, back to our big idea for today:

“God is the living God. We choose LIFE when we choose him, and that life is in fellowship with him.”

D. Fellowship with Him

And now let's look at 1 John 1

“That which was from the beginning . . . —the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ,” 1 John 1:1-4.

We are alive in Christ today. He lives in us.

And we can hear his voice—very faintly most of the time because of our fallen ears. But we can practice listening. He's alive. He's here. He's with you. Doesn't it make sense that you would hear from him once in a while?

He says, “My sheep hear my voice,” John 10:27.

And I want to encourage you that you have heard his voice, many times.

When you heard the gospel and said yes, you were hearing his voice, calling you to himself.

When you hear a sermon or read a book and it “speaks to you” you are hearing his voice.

When you see something beautiful or feel especially grateful, you are coming to awareness of his presence.

When someone says just the words you need to hear at that time, or that song comes on the radio, you are hearing his voice.

And God's word has to have spoken to you—his word is also "alive."

As Hebrews says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart," Hebrews 4:12

Has there been a time when something has stood out to you and you knew it applied to your situation or to your heart?

That is Jesus speaking to you.

And that is the source of life in your life.

God spoke life into existence, and he speaks spiritual life into us through his spirit and his word.

As Dallas Willard says, "We live—really live—only through God's regular speaking in our souls and thus 'by every word that comes from the mouth of God,'" Dallas Willard.

So, Lectio.

Read – What stands out to me?

Reflect – Why does it stand out to me? What are you saying to me God?

Respond—What do I need to say to God in response?

Rest—Sit quietly with God for a minute or two—being aware of his presence but not saying anything.

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this?" John 11:25.

If we should ever grow brave, what on earth would become of us? Joy Davidman.