

Series: The Names of God

Title: Adonai

Text: Genesis 15:2

Introduction

So far in this study, we have learned that the purpose of man is to what? Glorify God. The greatest discovery in life is when you discover that God loves you and wants you to know him. THE NAMES OF GOD we have studied so far have been:

1. Elohim translated "God" in our Bibles; The Mighty God
2. Jehovah translated "LORD" (in capital letters) is God's name.
3. and "El-Shaddai," translated "God Almighty" or "Almighty God."

Elohim expresses the power and glory of God. Jehovah is righteous, holy, loving, and redemptive. El-Shaddai is the benevolent and bountiful Bestower of powerful gifts, blessings, and fruitfulness for service. The name that we will examine today is the name Adonai.

Adonai is a name that makes a definite claim upon our obedience and service. The name *Adonai* is translated in our Bibles by the word Lord in small letters, with only the first letter capitalized. Adonai also reinforces the idea of a trinity, as does the name *Elohim*.

Adonai is used to show ownership over 300 times. When used in the plural and possessive form, it means my Lords'. It is used of men in the scriptures some 215 times. When it refers to men, it means "master" or "sir." In Genesis 24, Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, speaks of "my master Abraham" and says many times, "Blessed be Jehovah God of my master (my adon) Abraham." When the name is used of men, it is always in the singular form, *adon*.

When Adonai is used of God, is it in the plural. David writes in Psalm 110, "Jehovah said to my Adonai, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." ([Psalms 110:1 NKJV](#)). The phrase contains two different Hebrew words for "lord" in the original. The first "Lord" is the eternal God of the universe, the Great I AM, Jehovah, who revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3. But in Psalm 110, Jehovah speaks to someone else who is also David's "Lord."

The second "Lord" is Adonai, the Messiah, or the Christ.

- He sits at God's right hand (verse 1)
- He will triumph over all His enemies and rule over them (verses 1–2)
- He will lead a glorious procession of troops (verse 3)
- He will be "a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (verse 4)
- He will have divine power to crush kings, judge nations, and slay the wicked (verses 5–6)
- He will find refreshment and be exalted (verse 7)

In Matthew 22, Jesus identifies the second "Lord" of Psalm 110 as the Messiah, and the Pharisees all agree that, yes, David was speaking of the Messiah. A common title for the Messiah in Jesus' day was "Son of David" because the Messiah would be the descendant of David and inherit the throne and fulfill the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7). Jesus capitalizes on the Jewish use of the title "Son of David" to drive home His point in Matthew 22.

In verse 41, it says, "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, **"What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"** They said to Him, *"The Son of David."* He said to them, **"How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'LORD,' saying: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL" '? If David then calls Him 'LORD,' how is He his Son?"** And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore." (Matthew 22:41-46 NKJV)

In Acts Chapter 2, Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, says, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: 'I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART REJOICED, AND MY TONGUE WAS GLAD; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL REST IN HOPE. FOR YOU WILL NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN HADES, NOR WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE.' "Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL." ' "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:22-38 NKJV)

What's significant about Psalm 110 is that David singles out a member of the Trinity. Instead of using the plural Adonai, David uses the singular form Adoni.

"Jehovah said unto my Adon," or, "Yahweh said to Christ," the second Person of the Trinity! Christ's point is that He is the obedient servant of Jehovah – the Messiah!

I. The God of Obedient Servants

The name Adonai indicates ownership (lordship) and suggests that God is the owner of every member of the human family and has the right to claim them for His glory. Adonai is the "Lord of lords" in Deuteronomy 10:14. He is the "Master of masters."

Adonai reveals the relationship God wants to have with us and what He expects from us. The first time the name Adonai appears is in Genesis 15:2. After Abraham rescued Lot and defeated the four kings and their armies, "the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward." (Genesis 15:1 NKJV)

Abram addresses God as Adonai-Jehovah and acknowledges that Jehovah is also Master. Certainly, Abram understood what this relationship meant, probably better than we do because those were days of slavery. Lordship meant complete possession on the one hand and complete submission on the other. Abraham was considered the master and lord over a very large number of people. So when Abram addresses God as Adonai-Jehovah and acknowledges that Jehovah is also his Master, he does not see this as demeaning at all. He recognizes God's complete ownership of all that he was and had.

Often a purchased slave had a much better relationship with his lord than the hired servant. A hired servant was considered a stranger and could not eat of the Passover in the master's house. But a purchased slave was considered a member of the family with special privileges (Exodus 12:43-45; Leviticus 22:10, 11). A slave also had a right to the master's protection, help, direction, and affection.

In Abraham's day, slavery was not uncommon. When Abraham did not have a son, Eliezer, who was a slave, was the heir to Abram's entire estate. In Psalm 123, the psalmist writes, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God" (123:2).

Abraham comes to depend upon the faithfulness of his Master! He was also faithful to protect those under his care, which extended even to his nephew, Lot.

When God commissions Moses to go to Egypt to deliver Israel, he addresses God as Adonai. In Exodus 4:10, he says, "O my Adonai," "I am not eloquent . . . I am slow of speech." And again, he says after God's reply, "O my Adonai, send someone else." God's anger is kindled against Moses as a servant who tries to evade his responsibility of carrying out the will of his master.

God is never an unjust Master, nor does he ask us to do something we cannot perform. God never requires a task that He does not equip His servants to accomplish.

When God calls Gideon to deliver the children of Israel from the Midianites, Gideon responds, "O my Adonai, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house." (Judges 6:15 NKJV) God's answer is, "Surely I will be with you, and you will smite the Midianites as one man."

As Adonai, the Lord is the God of obedient servants. He is also the God who honors His servants.

II. The God Who Honors His Servants

David frequently refers to God by the name Adonai. In II Samuel 7:18-20, Adonai appears four times in three verses.

David starts out as a shepherd boy and servant in his father's house. But God takes him from tending sheep and makes him king of Israel. And because David understands so well the servant/master relationship, God promises to establish his dynasty and throne forever. David is overwhelmed by this great promise. He recognizes that God promises the Messiah will be one of his descendants.

In response, David, the king, and lord of God's people, calls God his Adonai, coupling it with the name Jehovah. 2 Samuel 7:18 says, " Then King David went in and sat before the Jehovah; and he said: "Who *am* I, O Adonai-Jehovah? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Adonai-Jehovah; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. *Is* this the manner of man, O Adonai-Jehovah? Now, what more can David say to You? For You, Adonai-Jehovah, know Your servant. For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know *them*. Therefore You are great, O Adonai-Jehovah. For *there is* none like You, nor *is there any* Elohim besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears." (2 Samuel 7:18-22 NKJV)

As Adonai, the Lord is the God of obedient servants, He is the God who honors His servants, and He is the God who encourages His servants.

III. The God Who Encourages His Servants

Isaiah the prophet sees a vision of God as Adonai, which starts him out on his prophetic career. It was a time of national darkness. Uzziah, Judah's great king, had died. In the sixth chapter, Isaiah tells us, "in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Adonai." (Isaiah 6)

Isaiah's earthly lord and master had died, but the Lord of lords, the Adonai in the heavens, still lives and reigns. The Adonai is seated upon a throne that is high and lifted up, above all earthly lords and monarchs. The Adonai is Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, whose train fills the Temple and whose glory covers the whole earth. The Adonai is surrounded by the fiery seraphim, who cover their eyes before their holy Lord, but with their wings spread, they are instantly ready to do His bidding.

Isaiah confesses his sinfulness, and God cleanses him, purifies his voice, and says, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" This call for service comes from Adonai. (Verse 8) Prophet after prophet is called and commissioned for service by Adonai, the Lord who claims obedience and service.

Jeremiah, often called the "weeping prophet," was ordained to be a prophet before his birth. When he answers the call, he says, "Ah, Adonai Jehovah! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6). But just like he promised Moses, the Adonai assures Jeremiah that He enables all His servants to carry out His commands when they yield to Him and obey. He touches the lips of his prophets and promises His presence and power.

In the prophecy of Ezekiel, the name *Adonai-Jehovah* occurs over 200 times. Ezekiel claims that Adonai has lordship over Israel and all the peoples of the earth. In Daniel 9, Adonai occurs ten times in seventeen verses. Daniel is living in the land of Israel's captivity and realizes it is God as Lord and Master they have disobeyed. In verse 19, he prays, "O Adonai, hear; O Adonai, forgive; O Adonai, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my Adonai, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name." (Daniel 9:19 NKJV)

Those who know God as Adonai acknowledge that they are His servants.

Conclusion

Between two and three centuries before Christ, the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek by a group of Jewish translators at Alexandria in Egypt. They translated the word *Adonai* in Genesis 15:2 as "Master."

In the New Testament, it is used hundreds of times of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, "do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NKJV)

Ephesians 5:17 says, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Adonai *is*." (Ephesians 5:17 NKJV)

It is the Adonai who qualifies us to be His servants. The apostle Paul was a zealous servant of the *Lord* God, the Adonai-Jehovah of his fathers. Even when he opposed and persecuted the Church, Paul believed he was doing God a great service. At his conversion, he cries out, "Lord [Master], (Adonai) what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). When Paul was in great danger, "The Adonai stood by him and said, Be of good cheer" (Acts 23:11) just as the Adonai said to Abram, "I am thy exceeding great reward."

To be the servant of the Lord is the greatest liberty and joy of all. God created us to serve. We need direction, guidance, and authority even in this world. When you were born, you came equipped to worship and serve.

Those who do not serve God will serve themselves and the gods of this world. Jesus said that no one can serve two masters (God and the Devil) at the same time.

In Romans 6:16, Paul writes, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16 NKJV)

Satan is a cruel master. His ways are the ways of sin, and sin will eventually destroy you. Satan makes slavery degrading. His lordship makes service demeaning. He has corrupted slavery and made it so evil that even the word slavery is repulsive to us.

But, Jesus was himself the ideal love servant (slave). He has invested His divine service with dignity, nobility, liberty, and joy. "For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise, he who is called *while* free is Christ's slave." (1 Corinthians 7:22 NKJV)

To be the servant of God is to be eternally free (Romans 6:22). It is the faithful servants of the Lord who will one day hear those joyful words from the lips of the Master, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your Adonai."

Adonai is the Master of masters, the Lord of Lords, the Ruling God who provides and blesses his servants with everything they need. Philippians 4:19 says, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19 NKJV) He is a Master who loves and cares for his servants. Our Adonai rewards our faithfulness with abundant blessings that exceed our greatest expectations.

And it is our joy to serve a Master who is so great and so kind!