

Adonai

There is a natural progression from Elhoim to El Elyon to Adonai. At least there has been in my experience. When I was a young boy, Elohim first got my attention with the wonder of His creation. There was a field of milkweed plants not far from my family's house in California. It was there that I discovered the Monarch butterfly caterpillar happily munching on those gooey plants. It wasn't long until I was religiously watching the life cycle from egg to maturity in my Mason jar butterfly house located in my bedroom "laboratory". The strong contrasts of orange and black butterfly wings with the antennae, horn tailed, black striped caterpillar and its pale green chrysalis never ceased to amaze me. After that introduction to the mystery and process of life in the animal kingdom, there never was a doubt in my young mind that there was a Creator. From there, it was not a stretch to assume that this imaginative Designer was also sovereign (El Elyon) over all that He had fashioned. But it wasn't until a number of years later that my eyes, by grace, were opened to the reality of His rule (Adonai) over me! At 19, after many vain attempts to control my life, I finally bowed my knee to the Lord of lords, and called Him Savior and Lord through Jesus.

Adonai is the name of God that speaks of His Lordship. In our English scriptures Adonai is translated as "Lord" (remember Yahweh is translated "LORD"). Adonai is the Lord of lords and the King of kings. He is the general, and we are the troops. He gives the orders, and we obey them. He makes decisions without consulting us, and they are always just and holy and righteous. We ask. He answers. We pray. He listens. We are His people. He is our Lord.

In Genesis 15, after having known victory over his enemies and having understood that El Elyon, the Sovereign God, brought about the victory, Abram acknowledges God's lordship over him. This is the first such recorded instance in the Bible. (Genesis 15:2, 8) Abram understood well the master-servant relationship, for he had many servants. However, we struggle with this relationship. We Americans pride ourselves in being "free" from all servitude. So it is not surprising that sometimes when I hear Christians pray, it sounds like they see God as their personal servant to do their bidding in the world. Indeed, some appear to have misinterpreted the scriptures which say we can "boldly" come before the Lord to mean that we can give Him orders, and He must carry them out. Just say the correct "words of faith", and God is supposed to jump into

action! This is not the language of a humble servant coming before the Almighty Lord whose ways and thoughts are not ours.

After we turn from the realm of darkness to light, we begin to give our domains to God, but too often, we hold on to a few kingdoms for ourselves. It's hard to give them up; in light of the supposed control that we believed we had while living in the illusion of darkness. Our minds are being renewed from a mindset of distrust to trust. We learned from the world that we could not trust anyone and that the only one we could trust was ourselves.

Just a little reflection shows us the fallacies in these assumptions. Indeed they are self-contradictory. If I can't trust anyone, why should I be able to trust myself? If I could depend on myself, why did I need a savior? A simple comparison of the areas of my life that I have turned over to God's control with those I still hang on to should give me a hint as to who's better at taking command!

It seems we have the hardest time making God Lord over three areas of our lives. First, we find it hard to give Him control of our resources. This would include our finances, our possessions, our time and our talents. We have all been brainwashed in the lessons of ownership. Think for a moment of how most of us struggle to give up any of these freely. In many ways, we are all like Jonah fleeing from placing ourselves and our resources at the disposal of our Lord for His purposes. Instead of sitting under a withering vine pouting about God's authoritative decisions of what to do and/or not do through us, we can trust His good decisions and learn to thrive under His direction.

Secondly, it's hard give God lordship over our future. We are a future-oriented society. We constantly look ahead. When we were kids we looked ahead to becoming adults. Today, we look ahead to the next raise at work. We look ahead to our next vacation. We look ahead to a time when we can retire. And for the most part, we want to control each of these in some way. James tells us to go ahead and make our future plans, but make sure that you remember to include a very important element in your future preparation:

*"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the **Lord** wills, we will live and also do this or that.'* But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:14–17)

What is the important element? It's the Lord's will. Not only is our God the Lord of our todays but also the Lord of our tomorrows. Can we humble ourselves and entrust our future to the One who is our Creator and Sovereign Ruler, the great I AM?

Thirdly, it's hard to give God lordship over trouble, both external and internal. Sometimes we are very quick to ask for prayer. We go to God with everything from a hangnail to cancer, looking for a quick fix, but not entering into that lingering time of allowing our Lord to reveal the nature of our anxiety. While at other times we become almost paralyzed by our troubles, running away from God, to whatever will bring solace no matter how temporary. In both cases with or without prayer we do not experience the peace that goes beyond our human understanding and that guards our anxious thoughts and inner turmoil. (Philippians 4:6-7) Why is this? Ultimately, isn't it an issue of trust? During the time consuming struggles of our troubles (some very dark indeed) we cannot forget that our Lord is there. He hears our cries for help. Through His Spirit, He supplies what we need and do not have on our own. Most often this supply is received one day at a time. Many troubles are of that nagging long-lasting variety. It is in those prolonged dark days that we experience our weakness and grow in our understanding of His strong supply. In this sense these troublesome days are gifts, where we gradually experience the end of our rope and the beginning of His open arms. It is here that we begin to hear the voice of our Good Shepherd, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heaving laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) It is here that these words cease being intellectually known and become experiential realities. It is here, in the crisis that trust in our Lord grows. It is here that we finally can say, "Thank you".

There are some very legitimate reasons not to trust someone with the control of your life. First, that the person is inherently evil. That certainly does not apply to God. He is the standard of goodness. Secondly, that he is incompetent. God has all knowledge and wisdom. How could He be considered incompetent? Finally, we might not trust one who lacks power. God lacking power? Hardly, He set the stars in in their courses. He holds all things together by the word of His power. Certainly, God is good enough, wise enough, and powerful enough to handle every part of your life. What personal kingdoms are you still holding on to? Have you accepted the Lord's terms for your salvation? Perhaps, now is the time to consider Jesus and His work and humbly receive, by faith, forgiveness and salvation, turning from your own efforts. Or as a believer, how about bowing

your knee and asking the Lord of lords to inspect your life for those areas you are retaining ownership. May the Lord be exalted as a result.

Assignment:

1. Read Genesis 15. Notice Abram's reference to God as Lord in verses 2 and 6.
2. What was Abram acknowledging that God was Lord over in verse 2?
3. In verse 6, what was Abram's response to the word of the LORD given in verse 4 and 5?
4. What was God's response to Abram in verse 6? Why?
5. What is the significance of what God does in verses 7-12 (see 17-19)?
6. How does God let Abram know that not only is He the Lord of his today but also the Lord of his tomorrows in verses 12-16?
7. Abram was learning to trust his Lord, and so are we. He had future tests in store, more learning to experience; and so will we. Stop and consider the lessons of trust in your life so far. List some of those lessons. What were the circumstances?

8. Consider the “kingdoms” of your resources, your future, and your troubles. In what “kingdom” do you still claim ownership? What is your greatest struggle to turn over to the lordship of God?

9. Read Romans 12:1-2. After Paul's great treatise on the wonder of God's plan of salvation, what does he exhort the reader to do as a result in verse 1? Why is this a reasonable response? What does this have to do with God being your Lord? Have you heeded Paul's exhortation?

10. In Romans 12:2 what does Paul give as an imperative? Why? What is your Lord's purpose for you?

11. Stop and respond to your Lord right now. How is He challenging you? Do you run to Adonai? Do you experience the Lord as a strong tower where you are safe?