

February 7, 2010 – Names of God – ADONAI

Today we're continuing with series of worship reflections called "Names of God." Our intent for the next several weeks, God willing, is that our corporate worship will be focused each week on one of the different Biblical "names" for God.

These names are a means that God uses to reveal Himself to us. Each name reveals a different aspect of His nature or His character. And it's my prayer that you will find that each of these "names" is actually an invitation to worship God – to draw near and know Him in your own life to be a manifestation of this particular name.

So far, we've looked at the names YHWH and ELOHIM. (By the way, if you've missed any of the previous weeks' worship reflections, you can watch them online anytime at our church's website.)

Today, we're going to focus for a moment on the name ADONAI. ADONAI is usually translated in our English Bibles as "Lord."

Now, that's "Lord" with a capital "L", but a *lower case* "ord." You may recall how we learned a few weeks ago that YHWH is *also* translated as "LORD," but with the "ord" in small *capital* letters.

Don't miss this! These two different renderings of the word "Lord" represent two *completely different* Hebrew words. This impacts how you understand the Bible! Psalm chapter 8, for example, begins:

Psalm 8:1

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!

Those are two different "Lords!"

So what we've learned is that this verse is saying:

"O **YHWH**, our **Adonai**, how majestic is Your name in all the earth."

Let's dig a little deeper into the *meaning* of this name, ADONAI.

The *singular* version of this word is ADON.

It's a title of respect for people, typically translated as "master" or "lord."

ADONAI is a *plural* form of ADON.

This is a lot like we saw last week with ELOHIM.

Maybe the Bible uses this plural form of the word as a name for God because He expresses Himself as a Trinity – Father, Son, and Spirit.

A plural name is at least *consistent* with this.

But remember, we also learned that the Hebrew language sometimes uses the plural form of a word, *not* to mean “more than one,” but as a literary device to emphasize or intensify the word.

So, ADONAI isn’t just “a lord,” He is “the *great, triune* Lord.”

But there’s more. ADONAI is both plural *and* **possessive**.

It’s a pronoun with a possessive ending.

So, even more than “*the* great Lord,” ADONAI really means “**my** great Lord,” it’s possessive, it means “**my** great Master.”

Now, clearly, there are implications to this, to genuinely calling God “ADONAI, my great Lord, my great Master.”

The name “ADONAI” implies both ownership and authority.

We like to claim ownership for ourselves, don’t we?

One of your first words (as a baby) was probably “mine!” as you gripped tightly to a cookie or a toy or something that was in your grasp and that you were claiming ownership of.

We pretty much keep doing that throughout life, claiming to “own” clothes and televisions and computers and cars and houses.

But, even if your car is paid for, even if your house is paid for, you’re not the owner. They don’t belong to you. The Bible says:

Deuteronomy 10:14, 17

To the LORD your God (to YHWH your ELOHIM) **belong** the heavens, even the highest heavens, **the earth and everything in it.**

For YHWH your ELOHIM is the God of gods and ADONAI ha-Adonim... (the Lord of lords).

ADONAI is the owner of the heavens and the earth and everything in it.

You and I are simply stewards – we’re guardians, we’re caretakers, we’re house-sitters – for the stuff that ALL belongs to ADONAI.

But He owns more than just *stuff*. ADONAI owns *US!*

He owns *me*; He owns *you*. We are His slaves, His servants.

Now, that may sound distasteful to you.

But this is actually really good news! It’s a *joy* to be a servant to ADONAI!

In Biblical times, to be a purchased slave was, in many ways, more advantageous than to be a hired employee. A purchased slave was like a member of the family. (Especially, if you had a good and kind owner, this was a great thing!) It was a very close relationship that included the right to the master's protection, his assistance and direction. A master obligated himself to take care of his servants. Psalm 123 refers to this. It says:

Psalm 123:2

Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master (adon),
...so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until He is gracious to us.

Servants look to their *master's* hand to provide for them and to care for them. In the same way, *we* look to *God*. We are His servants; He is our master. So, we look to Him – not *demanding* that He do certain things,
but waiting for (and expecting!) His grace, His provision, His goodness.

Of course, servants are required to SERVE.
The name ADONAI makes a definite claim on our obedience and service.

To be God's servant is a humbling thing, but it's not a demeaning thing. It actually puts us in very distinguished company. If you look through the Bible for people specifically described as God's "servants," you'll find list that includes Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, King David, King Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, (really "all the prophets"), Peter, James, John, the apostle Paul... *all* of these are spoken of and identify themselves as servants of God – recognizing His right to direct them and command them according to His will. Recognizing God as the ADONAI of their lives.

Calling God "Lord" *requires* that we obey Him and serve Him. That's what it means, right? That He's our Lord, our Master. In Luke chapter 6, Jesus asked His followers:

Luke 6:46

"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I say?"

It's inconsistent to call Jesus "Lord" and not obey Him.
It's incompatible to say "Lord" and "I won't" or "I can't."

Now, there are lots of *reasons* we can give why we can't obey, why we can't serve. Say that you are asked to "serve" God in some capacity, and you sense that God's really calling you to do this. But you respond, "I just don't have time."
(Ever used that one? Of course you have. *we all* have. "I don't have time.")

But here's the thing – it's not *your* time. It's **God's** time.

Because He is ADONAI, the owner of *everything*. He *created* time!

Our responsibility is to use the time that our Master has entrusted to us according to His desire.

And it's the same with our money, our abilities, our opportunities, our relationships...

They all belong to ADONAI – “my great Master.” We are His servants.

Even if we feel *unworthy* to serve, or *inadequate* to serve.

There's an interesting point in Moses' story, when God called him into service.

God had appeared to Moses at the burning bush and told him,

“I will send you to bring My people out of Egypt.”

Moses says, “Who am I, that I should do this?”

God replies, “I will be with you.”

God reveals His name, He promises miracles, He gives Moses miraculous signs.

Let's pick up this conversation in Exodus chapter 4...

Exodus 4:10-13

Moses said to the LORD, “O Lord (ADONAI), I have never been eloquent... I am slow of speech and tongue.”

Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth?

Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?

Now go; I will be with your mouth and will teach you what to say.”

But Moses said, “Oh, ADONAI, please send someone else.”

What's wrong with this picture? Yeah – Moses has just called God ADONAI, my great Lord and Master, *AND* tried to disobey Him *in the same sentence!*

And the Bible says that God was angry with Moses about this.

It's like, “Moses, I AM ADONAI! I deserve your obedience! Don't tell me you're unable to do what I've commanded. I'm your Creator – I will *make* you able!”

This reminds me of some passages in Isaiah, where ADONAI says to His people:

Isaiah 29:13, 16

The Lord (ADONAI) says:

“You turn things upside down, as if the potter were the same as the clay!

How can what is made say about its maker, ‘He didn't make me’?

Can the pot say of the potter, ‘He knows nothing’?”

God says:

Isaiah 45:9

“Woe to the one who argues with his Maker.

Will the clay say to the potter, ‘what are you doing?’”

Isaiah 64:8

But now, LORD, You are our Father;
we are the clay, and You are the potter; we all are the work of Your hands.

You see, He is the Potter; we are the clay. He is ADONAI; we are His servants.

He is our owner – we *belong* to Him.

He has complete authority over us.

Our responsibility is submission to His designs, His purposes, His plans.

We can be confident that His plans are always wise and good and in our best interest.

Our deepest desire should be to hear the words:

Matthew 25:23

“Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter in the joy of your Master.”

You see, it's JOY to be a servant of this Master!

It's an undeserved HONOR to be a servant of the most high God,

And unbelievable privilege to call Him “ADONAI” – to call Him *my* Lord & Master!

I mean, it's one thing to say I serve alongside Abraham and Moses.

It's *another* to say that *my* Master is ADONAI, the Creator of the Universe, the great I AM.

Behold, ELOHIM is my helper; ADONAI is the sustainer of my soul. *Psalms 54:4*

Psalms 147:2-5

...He gathers the outcasts.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

Great is ADONAI and abundant in power; His understanding is infinite.

He deserves our service. He deserves our worship. He deserves our obedience.

He is ADONAI.

PRAYER:

Father, You are our Owner, our great Lord, our wonderful Master.

You are ADONAI. We are your servants.

Help us, right now, to assume a posture of submission & obedience before You.

As they eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
so our eyes look to You...

...in expectation of grace and love and provision and guidance.

...and in humble. obedient worship.