

ADONAI – LORD AND MASTER

Genesis 15:1-21

INTRODUCTION

- The poem "Invictus," by atheist William Ernest Henley in 1875, describes the proud heart of man that refuses to bow its will to anyone, whether it be God or man

*I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

- Many people have the mistaken view that they are no one's servant, that they are their own master exercising complete autonomous control over their lives
- But the reality is that we are all slaves to something – either Satan or God; either sin or righteousness
- The great majority of humanity are under a great delusion, thinking they are free while they are actually enslaved by the most evil master that ever existed
- But when grace and salvation through Christ comes, that enslaved sinner is set free from his evil master of sin, and brought into the liberty of Jesus Christ (John 8:36)
- And this freedom is the most glorious freedom that can ever be experienced, because it is not an independent freedom which leaves us to ourselves, but a freedom under the Lordship of Christ
- To be *redeemed* is to be set free and bought with a price, and Christ's redemption effects a change of master – from Satan to Christ; from sin to righteousness (Romans 6:16-18,20,22)
- The proud, rebellious heart of man is the great obstacle to repentance and salvation, which refuses to submit to Christ, but says, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14)

- They defy God and Christ’s authority and say, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psalm 2:3)
- In our studies of the names of God, we have looked at the first name of God revealed in Scripture – *Elohim* (the Mighty One), along with its shortened form, *El*, and some of its compound names, *El Elyon* (the Most High God) and *El Shaddai* (the Almighty, All-Sufficient God)
- Here we will consider *Adon* / *Adonai* which simply means “lord” and “master”, as well as “owner” and “possessor”
- *Adon* is used variously in the Old Testament of kings, as rulers over their subjects (Isaiah 26:13), and of husbands, as lords of their wives (Genesis 18:12); and of God, as proprietor of the world (Joshua 3:13; Exodus 23:17; Psalm 114:7)
- It is also used of a ruler or governor (Genesis 14:8); and hence as a title of respect in addressing, e.g. a father (Genesis 31:35), a brother (Numbers 12:11), a royal consort (1 Kings 1:17-18), and especially kings or nobles (2 Samuel 14:9; 1 Kings 3:17)
- *Adon* is found in a number compound names in Scripture
 - ✓ Adonizedek (Joshua 10:1) – Lord of Justice
 - ✓ Adonibezek (Judges 1:5) – Lord of Bezek (city)
 - ✓ Adonijah (1 Kings 1:5) – My Lord is Jehovah
 - ✓ Adoniram (1 Kings 4:6) – My Lord is Exalted
 - ✓ Adonikam (Ezra 2:13) – The Lord is Risen Up, or Whom the Lord Sets Up
- The Greek god’s name *Adonis* is also derived from the Hebrew *Adon*
- *Adon* is the singular, while *Adonai* is the plural (similar to the plural *Elohim*)
- *Adonai*, the plural form, is used of God not to denote number, but intensity and magnitude

- In our English Bible, Adonai is rendered “Lord” while Jehovah is rendered “LORD”
- Unlike the other names of God we have been studying, Adonai is not a *name* by which God revealed himself to man – it is was a *title* of reverence and deference that was already used among men, but which came to be applied to God, who is the supreme Lord and Master
- There are at least two places in the Old Testament where God applies this title to himself (Job 28:28; Isaiah 8:7), but the majority of uses are men speaking to, or of, God
- Like the previous name, El Shaddai, Adonai speaks of the *relationship* between God and man
 - ✓ El Shaddai deals with God’s *sustaining* of us, Adonai deals with God’s *ownership* of us
 - ✓ El Shaddai shows our *dependence* on God, Adonai reveals our *submission* to God
- Adonai is used of the Master-Slave relationship, but often this relationship is misunderstood, as people think of slavery in modern terms, where slaves are treated as animals and there is often cruelty and abuse
- The servant/slave in ancient times did involve ownership of another, but the slave often enjoyed a close relationship with his master, participating in the life of the family as a member of the family. The slave enjoyed his master’s protection and provision
- This is seen with Eliezer, the slave of Abram, who, before Isaac was born, was considered the heir to Abram’s house (Genesis 15:2-3)
- Genesis 14 has the account of the battle between the kings, where Abram intervened to rescue Lot

- God was revealed there as El Elyon, the Most High God
- Abram had made some powerful enemies who may well have been planning revenge against him
- So in chapter 15 God appears to Abram and says, “Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”
- Abram refused to take a reward from the king of Sodom, but God would be his exceeding great reward
- In v.2 Abram replied to God as *Adonai Jehovah* and questioned God regarding his reward, pointing out that he was childless and his servant was his heir
- God answered that he indeed would have a son by Sarai and innumerable descendants (vv.4-5), and Abram believed God (v.6)
- Then God promised the land (v.7), and in response, Abram again addresses God as Adonai Jehovah, seeking a proof or sign of God’s promise (v.8)
- So God ratified his covenant by having Abram sacrifice animals, and God himself passing between the divided pieces (v.17)
- As we study this title, we will consider firstly what it means with regards to God’s lordship, then what it means with regards to our obligations to that lordship

I. THE SOVEREIGN RULE OF ADONAI

A. The extent of Adonai's rule

1. Over heaven (Daniel 5:23)
2. Over the whole earth (Psalm 97:5; 8:1)
3. Over nations, kings and rulers of the earth (Psalm 2:1-4)
4. Over the wicked (Psalm 37:12-13)

5. Over all gods (Psalm 135:5; Deuteronomy 10:17)

B. The nature of his Rule

1. He is ready to forgive (Psalm 86:5)

2. He thinks upon his people (Psalm 40:17)

3. He blesses and provides for his people (Psalm 68:19)

4. He defends his people (Psalm 78:65-66)

5. He chastens his people (Isaiah 30:20)

C. Jesus Christ is Adonai

1. The New Testament uses the Greek word *kurios* (Lord) for both Jehovah, Adonai and Adon

a. “The LORD (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (Adon), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Psalm 110:1)

b. “For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD (*kurios*) said to my Lord (*kuriō*), Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord (*kurios*); and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.” (Mark 12:36-37)

2. When Christ is called “Lord” in the New Testament, it carries the same meaning as Adonai, and expresses Christ’s deity and authority over all things

3. “Lord” (*kurios*) is used of Christ in the New Testament over 700 times (in comparison to “Saviour” only 24 times)

4. Christ demonstrated his lordship during his earthly ministry

- a. He is Lord over sickness, disease and death (Matthew 12:15)
- b. He is Lord over temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)
- c. He is Lord over Satan (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8)
- d. He is Lord over demons (Luke 4:36; Acts 10:38)
- e. He is Lord over the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8)
- f. He is Lord over the wind, the waves and all nature (Matthew 8:23-27)
- g. He is Lord over the angels (Matthew 24:31)
- h. He is Lord over his enemies (Colossians 2:15)
- i. He is Lord over hell and death (Revelation 1:18)

II. OUR SUBMISSIVE RESPONSE TO ADONAI

- A. If God indeed is Adonai, then all of us have an obligation to acknowledge his lordship over us
 1. God expects his servants to honour and fear him (Malachi 1:6)
 2. The apostle Paul's favoured description of himself was "a servant of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1)
- B. The prophet Isaiah beheld the glory of Adonai, and demonstrates the proper response (Isaiah 6:1-8)
 1. Humility, fear, conviction of sin (5)
 2. Willing obedience (8)

- C. The cry of “Adonai” in prayer establishes the humble, submissive, servant spirit by which we approach our benevolent Master in times of need
1. Moses, when realising his insufficiency to stand and speak before Pharaoh, cried to Adonai (Exodus 4:10)
 2. Joshua, after Israel’s defeat at Ai, cried to Adonai (Joshua 7:7-8)
 3. Gideon, in his timidity and feelings of inadequacy to lead Israel, cried to Adonai (Judges 6:15)
 4. Samson, blinded, weakened and humiliated, sought for strength to avenge his enemies by crying to Adonai (Judges 16:28)
 5. David, newly crowned as king, in humble thanksgiving to God, cried to Adonai (2 Samuel 7:18-20)
 6. Jeremiah, called by God as a prophet, felt insufficient for the task, and cried to Adonai (Jeremiah 1:6-8)
 7. Daniel, confessing the nation’s sins, seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness, cried to Adonai (Daniel 9:1-19)

CONCLUSION

1. The divine title, *Adonai*, is a declaration
 - ✓ Of God’s sovereign position as Lord
 - ✓ Of God’s supreme authority as Lord
 - ✓ Of God’s right to demand obedience as Lord
 - ✓ Of God’s power to provide and meet all our needs as Lord
2. Adonai remains “the Lord” over all, but he must become “our Lord” and “my Lord” by submitting to him in repentance and faith (cf. Psalm 8:1,9)

3. There are many people who claim God and Christ as their Lord with their mouths, but deny it with their lives (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23)
4. Such people who reject his lordship will be miserably slain before him on the day of judgment (Luke 19:27)
5. We are all servants of a master, either Christ or sin, whose servant are you?
6. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)
7. Will you, like Saul on the Damascus Road, cast yourself trembling at the feet of Jesus, and cry, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6)
8. *Divine, Almighty Lord,
My Conqueror and my King,
Thy sceptre and thy sword,
Thy reigning grace I sing:
Thine is the power; behold I sit
In willing bonds beneath thy feet.*
(Isaac Watts)