

Adonai

Adonai is translated in the Bible by the word **Lord**.

Used as a name of God *Adonai* occurs some three hundred times in the Old Testament. It is used of men some two hundred fifteen times.

When used of men it is variously translated *master*, *sir*, and *lord* (with a little 'l'), but mostly translated *master*.

Used of men it is always in the singular form, *adon*. Used of God I'm told it occurs almost always in a plural possessive, meaning Lords'. Thus there is a suggestion of the Trinity in its usage as a plural. The implication of The Trinity in this name is obvious in Psalms 110:1.

Psalms 110:1 The LORD [YHWH] said to my Lord [Adonai], "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

It signifies ownership or mastership and indicates the truth that God is the rightful owner of each member of the human family.

It means complete possession by the Master hand and complete submission by the servant.

It's first use is with Abraham in Genesis 15:2,

Genesis 15:1 After these things 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 15:2 But Abram said, "Lord [Adonai] GOD [YHWH], what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?"

Abraham had just fought a battle to rescue his nephew, Lot. Abraham's army was comprised of his own servants and slaves. He was their 'lord' in the earthly sense. They followed his lead into battle

and fought fiercely. In acknowledging YHWH as his Adonai Abraham was putting himself in a position like his own servants and slaves were to him.

Let's look at some other Bible men who called out Adonai. Isaiah had a famous vision. In the sixth chapter of his book he tells us he had a vision of the Lord – and uses the title Adonai. His earthly lord and master, King Uzziah, had died; but what did that matter when you are a servant of Adonai? The Lord was seated on His throne; His train filled the heavenly Temple; His glory covered the whole earth. He was surrounded by fiery seraphim ready to do His bidding, who cried Holy, holy, holy. Isaiah was moved to volunteer for service and it is Adonai Who sends him forth.

The use of Adonai is prominent by Daniel. In the ninth chapter of his book he had just realized that the seventy-year captivity of the Jews in Babylon was nearing its end. Daniel prayed a prayer of confession for himself and his people. Daniel addressed God as Adonai ten times in seventeen verses. He was acknowledging God's right as their Master to discipline them.

These men, and others like David and Ezekiel, used Adonai to indicate their understanding that God was their absolute Master. They were His servants; they were His slaves. Adonai had the right to command and dispose of them according to His will.

This meaning is carried over into our New Testament. Read the New Testament and you will conclude that you are not free; you have been bought. Jesus Christ bought you out of slavery to sin and death. Now we belong to Him:

[1 Corinthians 6:19](#) Or 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?

[1 Corinthians 6:20](#) For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

We are exhorted to present ourselves to the Lord and be at His full disposal:

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

The apostle Peter says that God is the Master who has bought us (Second Peter 2:1) and calls us children of obedience to Him who has called us (First Peter 1:14-15).

The service of the apostle Paul illustrates this total Lordship of Jesus over his life:

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Romans 14:8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

The Lord Jesus Himself, in His humanity, illustrated submission to Lordship. Though Himself God and Lord, as a man He was the ideal and faithful servant.

Before His incarnation He was described as a servant:

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

- being changed to bring change -
In His first coming as God in human flesh He is described as a servant:

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
Philippians 2:6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

Philippians 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus spoke of Himself as a servant:

John 8:29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus applied His submission as a servant to His followers. After stooping to wash the feet of His disciples, He said,

John 13:14 If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

John 13:16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

John 13:17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Lordship... submission... obedience. If that were all this name Adonai meant we should rejoice in it! Truth is, our nature is to dislike lordship over us. It got our parents into trouble in the Garden of Eden. It has only gotten worse.

We need lordship. Our faculties and judgments are severely impaired, distorted by sin (both original and personal). We need direction and guidance from an authoritative outside source. We are born to worship and serve; but if we do not worship and serve God then directly or indirectly we worship and serve the devil.

Romans 6:16 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?

One author said, "To be subject to Satan is to be abject." (Abject means *hopeless, humiliating, wretched, slavish*.)

Jesus elevates serving God to a place of dignity, nobility, liberty, and joy.

1 Corinthians 7:22 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.

Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

The faithful slave of Adonai looks forward to hearing these words:

Matthew 25:23 ...'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

But there is something even more that is suggested by the name Adonai. God is never an unreasonable Master and therefore does not ask what cannot be performed. He never requires a task for which He does not equip His servants. In other words, everything God asks us to do is good and just and can be accomplished as we trust Him to enable us to do all that He has asked us to do.

In Bible times the relationship of a master and a servant or slave was not necessarily something bad. In fact, a purchased slave had some privileges a hired servant did not. The hired servant who was not an Israelite could not eat the Passover, but the purchased slave could because he was considered a member of the master's family (Exodus 12; Leviticus 22). The slave had the right of the master's full protection and care. In the absence of an heir a slave could be the one to inherit. Earlier when Abraham talked to his Adonai he spoke of Eliezer, a slave, as his heir.

Thus the psalmist said,

Psalms 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes *look* to the LORD our God, Until He has mercy on us.

If a human master can be affectionate towards and be faithful in providing for and protecting his slave, how much more our Adonai?

You see this in a negative way at the calling of Moses to deliver the children of Israel. Moses addressed God as Adonai but then complained he would not be able to accomplish the task God set forth. He complained he was slow of speech and not very eloquent.

God's anger was kindled. Why? Because God would never ask His servant to do something without equipping him! His lordship implies His equipping.

God is presented in the New Testament as equipping us to serve Him. We've been noting on Sunday mornings the various

relationships a believer has or can have with the Holy Spirit. He is with us before we are saved, leading us to saving faith in Jesus. He comes in us when we are saved. He can come upon us to give us power to be witnesses. We are to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit.

He is the Person always present with us, in every situation, with power sufficient for our need.

God gives gifted men to His Church in order to equip believers to do the work of serving Him.

He distributes to each and every one of us a gift or gifts. They are not our natural abilities. They are His supernatural abilities by which we serve Him.

Even in suffering or adversity God equips us. The apostle Paul prayed to be healed of his thorn in the flesh. God responded telling him that grace was sufficient for his need.

Conclusion

A servant was free to come and go; a slave was not. But for that freedom to come and go the servant could not partake of the full measure of his master's love, faithfulness, and provision.

We are the Lord's servants. Are we His slaves? Do we present our bodies as living volunteers... Or as living sacrifices?

As we go to the Lord's table we are reminded of the fullness of His sacrifice on our behalf. He put Himself under the lordship of Adonai.

How can we do any less?