

ADONAI - Master (part 5)

Adonai is the Hebrew name for God as master. In good biblical translations this will be identified by the English term Lord (capital letter only at the beginning). Like Elohim, Adonai also denotes a plural tense, as Adon is the singular noun. In the bible, Adon is translated lord (human master) but Adonai is only ever used for God our master.

At first glance, God as master might seem like just another name for God as LORD. But Adonai is quite different. Some scholars will translate Adonai as *my* master. This infers less about God, and more about man. God might be many things to us, but He is always our master, and we are always his servants. Adonai reminds us of our place in God's order. Now to the humble of heart, this is not a difficult thing. No one begins a life of following Christ with grand ideas about one's place in the universe. But sometimes, as we walk and are used by God, it is easy to begin to have inflated views about our own importance.

If we don't keep our relationship in perspective, then we can begin to believe that God somehow *needs* us, or owes us something. This is *never* the case! Jesus made this clear when He was instructing His disciples. He had given them authority to "...drive out demons and to heal every disease and sickness." **(see Matt 10:1)** He tells them that they too will be hated, and then warns them, "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master." **(Matt 10:24)**

Sadly, too often I have heard anointed men of God almost demanding God to heal, or move in a service. My bible tells me that Jesus said 'Ask, seek & knock **(see Matt 7:7)** and it will be given you, not demand, push your way into my presence and knock down the door!' I have also heard men refer to the church as '*their*' church, unfortunately at times speaking as if they own their place of worship like Donald Trump owns his business. But the church is not 'ours' in that sense, any more than God is hanging around waiting for us to tell Him what we want Him to do. Jesus said "...I will build *my* church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." **(Matt 16:18)** emphasis mine) I wonder if this empire mentality, rather than a kingdom mentality is why so many successful pastors fall. Have some in the church forgotten who it is they are building for? Have they forgotten that they are the servants and that they have a master?

When Jesus spoke about a servant and his master, He had some very interesting things to say. First He said that "No servant can serve two masters..." **(Luke 16:13a)** Though He was talking about money, the point is quite clear. We

cannot bend our will two ways. Total devotion and servant-hood can only be given to one master at a time, and the biggest battle the average Christian has is whether to accept Jesus as 'Adonai', or put ourselves in His place.

Jesus also said "...you have only one Master and you are all brothers." **(Matt 23:8b)** Here, Jesus was saying that there is only one Master over the church, Himself. **(see Eph 5:25)** Anything we do, any service we give, must be in accordance with His will, and done out of a heart to serve the one true Master, God. Anything else is merely serving ourselves. We must constantly evaluate the motivation behind our actions and for whom we are serving. Unfortunately, too often this can become a real issue within a ministry team. Too often, gifted people, starting out with all good intentions, begin to covet their role and take the glory for themselves. As a ministers *servant* in the church, it is prudent for us to look for signs of pride and self-gratification in ourselves.

It is usually subtle at first and may even be masked behind false humility in the early stages. Putting one's self down, whilst secretly looking for compliments. Going home upset because our microphone wasn't up loud enough, or no one said how well they had done (Though I will admit, encouragement is also often lacking in the church generally). Wanting to only play with the 'better' musicians. Coveting our role. Not submitting our talents to the church as a whole, it's leadership and ultimately to Christ! Eventually it is the sense of achievement when a service goes well and everyone is telling you how much they enjoyed your ministry today, or the praise you receive for the service you have performed that become the motivator and the goal. These are all the beginnings of pride, and when pride steps into a servant, the servant becomes his own master! Jesus told the Pharisees (with all their outward appearance of religiousness) "What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight." **(Luke 16:15b)**

I pray this might never be said to us in our church, as we keep Jesus in His rightful place as Adonai, and ourselves firmly grounded as his humble servants. In the Kingdom of Heaven, it is when we keep this perspective, that God blesses us! "For everyone who...humbles himself will be exalted." **(Luke 14:11)** and again "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." **(Matt 20:26)**

It is hard to believe when we step back, that some might lose sight of God's awesomeness and somehow begin to believe that we are His equal, but this is exactly what we do when we make decisions without a moments thought as to God's will. So too, when we try to manipulate circumstances for our own end, build a career for ourselves in the church (outside of God's plan for us), or take credit for that which God has gifted us.

Actually, when we look at the Apostle Paul’s ministry, an interesting thing happens. When we put his letters in a chronological timeline, as he speaks of himself in his writings, we notice a curious thing. As we read **1Cor 15:9, Eph 3:8, & 1Tim 1:16** Paul refers to himself as “the least of the Apostles”; “the least of the Lord’s people”; “the worst of sinners”.

Now Paul, the great missionary to the gentiles, the longer his ministry goes on – the greater the things he did through God’s power, the more He saw God do, and understood who God was, the less he thought of himself! Indeed, I have often said, the over-riding characteristic in the person close to God, will be, not the miraculous, not incredible preaching, not great achievements (necessarily), but they will be overwhelmingly characterised by their humility. The closer one comes to know the Holiness, power and love of God, the more they will know what great a sacrifice and grace there is in God’s calling of the individual. This as it did with Paul, will lead to surrender and servanthood...a proper perspective of one’s place in God’s kingdom.

When we keep God as Adonai always before us, we come to realise that any gift we might have, any talent we have acquired, the way we look, the sound of our voice, indeed all that we are and will ever be, is there to serve His purpose and to glorify His name. It shows only His grace to broken vessels like us that we might have any talent at all and we have a responsibility (not just a choice) to use what we have to serve our Master’s purposes.

Finally, let’s take a quick look at God’s words to Satan (the accuser) as the dark angel presents himself before God. “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” (**Job 1:8**) Job was such wonderful servant that God picks him out as an example to the fallen angel of the obedience of at least one man on earth. For this he receives special attention, and a book in the bible.

What was special? He served God in his heart, in his mind and with his strength. He prayed for his children, he shunned evil and had a healthy level of holy fear for God. In short, Job knew his place in the ultimate scheme of things. That he was a man, a servant of the Most High God. That all his wealth, health, family and friends were from God, and he did not think for a moment about his own greatness. At no time does it appear that he himself thought he was the greatest man in the East – he left that up to the narrator! (**see Job 1:3**) May we serve our Heavenly Master, Adonai, with the same level of holy fear and never forget our place as His servants.

So, when all is said and done. When this life has run its course and we stand before The Lord God almighty, we will hold nothing of what we have accumulated in this world. For the most part, our position at work, in society, our bank balance, our home...nothing of what we own will stand with us. Indeed, rather than what we own, it may well be what we have given away for Christ’s sake that will stand with us, and almost certainly what we have done in His Name, by His power and for His glory that will last. It is to this, we hope to hear, “Well done good and faithful servant.” (**Matt 25:21**) And for this, a crown (**see James 1:12; 1Cor 9:25; 2Tim 4:8; 1Pet 5:4;)** ...one we may lay at the feet of our Master, Lord, ADONAI. (**see Rev 4:10**)

Study 7 – questions

1. How do you see the difference between LORD (as in Jehovah) and Lord / Master (Adonai)?

2. In what way does being a ‘servant’ of God change the way you spend your time / think about serving in His church/gospel?

3. Read **Matthew 24:42-51**. How do you interpret Jesus’ words? Who is he talking about?

4. Read **Matthew 23:8**. What does this Scripture say about who is our master and what is our relationship with each other? How should this ‘colour’ our service to one another?

5. If we are not serving Christ, what other things can we find ourselves serving?
What traps do you find you can fall into?

6. Sadly, music teams and preachers are two of the most prone areas in the church to lose sight of their Godly service? Why do you think that is, and how can we stay focussed on the one true Master?

7. Read **Job 1:1-8**. Why do you think God singled Job out when Satan came accusing?

8. Read **Philippians 2:5-8** Christ was the perfect example to us of a servant. Was there anything Christ left undone in His service to his Heavenly Father? What obstacles do you find in the church/world to your own service for God?

9. Compare **1Cor 15:9, Eph 3:8, & 1Tim 1:16**. What do you notice about Paul's thoughts about himself the longer he knew Christ? What does this say about a true servant's humility, even when God has clearly used him powerfully?

10. What do you think the day we stand before our Lord will be like? What will we have to offer Him? For what will he say of us, "well done good and faithful servant?"

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Matthew 25:23