



Isaiah 6:1-8
 What's In A Name?
 Adonai: Lord

Rev. Brian North
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 2nd Advent Sunday

This morning we continue our series, titled, “What’s In A Name?” as we look at some of the Biblical names of God. And this morning we come to a Hebrew name for God we’ve already looked at a little bit because it often gets intertwined with another name for God that we looked at a few weeks ago, which was Yahweh. And today’s name is “Adonai.” This is the word whose vowels get combined with the consonants of Yahweh, to create the word “Jehovah” or “Yehovah”. **Both Yahweh and Adonai usually get translated as “Lord” though Yahweh is usually written out in all capital letters in our English Bibles (LORD), while Adonai is written more normally (Lord).**

I personally believe that “Lord” is probably the name for God that we tend to use the most without really thinking about its meaning. And there’s a story I came across this week that helps illustrate this. A Sunday School Teacher asked her eight eager 10 year-olds if they would give \$1,000,000 to the church.

“Yes!” they all screamed!

“Would you give \$1,000?” Again, they shouted “YES!”

How about \$100?” “Oh, yes we would!” they all agreed!

“Would you give just a dollar to the church?” she asked.

They exclaimed, “Yes!” just as before...except for Johnny.

“Johnny,” the teacher said as she noticed the boy clutching his pocket, “Why didn’t you say ‘yes’ this time?”

“Well,” the boy stammered, “I *have* a dollar in my pocket!” He was happy to hypothetically “give” what he wasn’t able...but when the possibility suddenly set in of *actually* giving, he wasn’t so sure.

This story gets to the heart of what it means to call God, “Lord” and mean it in reality, and not just hypothetically. Another translation of Adonai is “master.” So Adonai is not just a name, and not just a title...it’s a relationship, where the one who is “Adonai” has input and authority in the other person’s life; a person follows the leading and directions of their “lord.” We’ll get into that more in a moment. Let’s start by looking at the word itself, which we encounter in two places in today’s passage – verse 1 and verse 8. The other instances of “Lord” in the middle are “Yahweh.”

Much like “Elohim” that we looked at last week, the word “Adonai” is also plural – it’s a different ending, but it is plural. The root word is “Adon” (rhymes with “own”) and it means “lord” or “master” or “king.” Also like “Elohim” it is not used only to refer to God – it can be used of people, too. If you trace my family lineage on my dad’s side far enough back, you will find that it leads to “Lord North” of England (**Picture**). Elliott saw this as I was working on my sermon and said, “You DO look related. You and he have the same nose.” I’m glad that’s the only resemblance, quite frankly. 😊 So, Lord North was the Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1770-1782. I remind you that we gained independence in the middle of that tenure – in 1776. You can make an educated guess that his 12 years as Prime Minister was a very tumultuous time for Britain and for him as the PM – and you’d be right.



Some of his decisions drove the colonies to revolt as they did. For instance, he helped maintain the tax on tea that led to the Boston Tea Party. So my relationship with Lord North is...complicated: I’m proud because he was the Prime Minister...it’s pretty cool to have that in our family history; but I’m also a bit sheepish about it, because he made some significant gaffes; but I’m grateful for him because he helped spur the colonies to seek independence and become the nation that we are. The whole reason I mention him is that: **If his title, or anyone else with a similar title of “lord” were to be translated to Hebrew, this word, “Adon” would be used.** And it is used in Scripture to speak of people who are in similar kinds of positions – like a prince or a

king or even a head of household. It's not a word that is used in the Bible to only address God – unlike Yahweh or Jehovah.

As I mentioned, “Adonai” is a plural form of the word. **It's the same kind of plural usage – when speaking of God as “Adonai” – that we looked at last week, where it's plural in *form*, but not in its meaning.** Like “Elohim,” it is also used with singular verbs in Scripture when it is being used to speak of God, which helps us know it's not intended to be read as plural “lords.” It's this same Hebrew construction called “plural of intensity” or “plural of emphasis” or “plural of majesty.” Because of the grammatical similarities to Elohim, we won't dive into the Hebrew as much as we did last week; quite frankly, I think I'm still having a Hebrew hangover from last Sunday – and a lot of that is applicable to Adonai as well, so no need to rehash it in such detail.

I also want to start moving us into New Testament names for God some, because: **Some of the names we are looking at now begin to be used frequently in the New Testament as well (but in Greek).** So, as a refresher, or in case you didn't know: the Old Testament was written in Hebrew – except for 8 total chapters in the books of Daniel and Ezra that were written in Aramaic – and the New Testament was written in Greek. Additionally, the first translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to another language was in to Greek. That Greek Old Testament is called the Septuagint.

And so many of these Old Testament names for God have their Greek equivalents. For instance, “God” in Greek is the word “Theos” – we get our word “theology” from it, for example. And **“Theos” is used to translate “Elohim.” The Greek word, “Kurios,” which means “Lord,” is used to translate Yahweh, Jehovah, and Adonai.** And when you get to the New Testament, written in Greek, it's also either just “Theos” for “God” or “Kurios” for “Lord.”

The point is this: The Hebrew “Adonai” and the Greek, “Kurios” both mean Lord, or master. As I mentioned at the start of the message, we see Adonai in today's passage on two occasions, and we also see Yahweh twice.

Adonai is in the first verse and the eighth verses: **“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord [Adonai], high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1)**. Now, this isn’t the first time in Scripture we encounter Adonai as a name for God. The first time we encounter it is actually in Genesis 15 when Abram – who later changed his name to Abraham – addresses God as “Adonai Jehovah.” “Lord God” he is calling him, and we see the two words together quite frequently in the Old Testament. Sometimes the pairing gets translated as “Sovereign Lord” or “Sovereign God”. But putting the two words together, it helps us to link “Adonai” to God.

Anyway, that’s what we have here in verse 1: “I saw the Lord, (Adonai) high and exalted, seated on the throne.” So Isaiah has this vision of God, a vision into heaven, really, with Seraphim (which after last week’s sermon you ought to know is plural for Seraph ☺), ...there are multiple “seraphs”...which seem to be angels, but they have 6 wings. And though this is sort of a vision of heaven, Isaiah finds himself in the midst of it as well, as one of the Seraphs comes to him and touches his lips with coal to cleanse him after his proclamation about not being clean. He’s not literally and physically touched, but in the vision he is.

Then the last verse we read has “Adonai” again: **“Then I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai) saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8)**. Isaiah’s response shows us the heart of one who calls God “Adonai” – Lord, or Master. It’s the response of someone who is available and ready to serve as the Lord, or the Master, asks and leads and presents opportunities.

So there are a couple things I think we can take away from “Adonai” that help us in our journey of faith. **First, “Adonai” helps see that God is not just the Creator of everything seen and unseen, but He is the Lord of it all. He is the Master.** From the very first time we understand what “mine” means, we want to cling to and claim ownership. Take for example two children who are playing together with a toy someone has given to one of them. Maybe you will even witness something like this on Christmas day in a few weeks. The children did nothing to deserve the toy. They did not pay for

it. Yet as soon as one of the children attempts to play alone with the toy, what happens? The “owner” of the toy – the one to whom the gift was given – that one snatches it back with a screeching protest, “Mine!” Somehow, all of us have the mistaken notion that we are owners.

However, ownership rarely proves to be all we expect it to be. We buy a home only to find that we desire a bigger home or another home in a different location. We also discover that ownership is filled with the constant demand of repair and maintenance. The roof leaks the week before the plumbing backs up, which is just before the refrigerator goes out, and we just replaced the dishwasher three months earlier, and a kid threw a baseball in the house which – fortunately – missed the window but put a hole in the sheetrock. No, that is not autobiographical...at least not in such quick succession...but we’ve come close to that. **The truth is, you're not an owner; you're simply a steward. The Lord is owner of all that exists. He is the Master.**

So, sometime this week during a devotional time, or after church today, take out a piece of paper (or start a document on your computer/phone) and make up a deed signing everything over to God, the rightful owner. Write something like this: **“Lord, all I have has never been mine. Somehow, I took over what is yours. I am excited to acknowledge that I am a steward and that you are owner of all that is on this deed.”** Sign it, at date it. And then, start listing things: career, home, bank account, your family, possessions, your talents and spiritual gifts, your body, your car, the television, the computer, the dishwasher...and hardest of all: your cell phone and social media accounts. This deed will be a reminder to you that you are not the lord of these things. Whether you do that or not, it is a joy to be a steward for the sovereign God of the universe, who has revealed Himself to be holy and righteous. We can rest in the assurance that He is trustworthy and able to provide for our every need because He is the owner of it all; He is Lord of everything.

Second, and in some ways foundational to the first point, but it’s something to do on an ongoing basis: **Second, we would do well to regularly wrestle with the question, “Who/what is Lord/Master in my life?”** There is a lot that seeks this position, and at different times any of a number of things can

be lord of our lives – they ebb and flow into/out of that position: Money, Possessions, positions, power, pleasing others, success, or appearing successful, knowledge, insecurities, fears – like fear of failure or fear of stepping out in faith...and so much more. There is a lot that can slip into lordship in our lives – including for Christians who would say that Jesus is not just their Savior but also their Lord. And we use those two words regularly, right? He’s our Lord and Savior. Do you know that every time that phrase appears in the New Testament, it is always “Lord and Savior” in that order? Never “Savior” first. Jesus is our Lord – our “Kurios” – before he is our Savior.

But is he? Is he my Lord and your Lord? That’s the question to ask.

Jesus speaks to this near the end of the Sermon on the Mount. He says, **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven (be saved), but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”** (Matthew 7:21-23).

And then he closes the sermon out with a parable that teaches the importance of doing the will of God. Doing God’s will shows his lordship in a person’s life. So people may call Jesus “Lord” but is he really? Is Jesus the one who gives your life direction? Is Jesus the one who shapes the decisions you make about ethics, morals, money, relationships, and so forth? If we say he is, but our decisions don’t square up with Scripture, then something else is actually lord of our lives...something else has mastery over us, rather than Jesus.

So I invite you to a place of faith: to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior. Jesus died on the cross as the once and final sacrifice to atone for sin, and God the Father raised Jesus from the dead as an assurance about hope for eternal life. Who else has gone to such lengths to save you, and who else would you prefer to have as your Lord? Invite him into your life as Lord and Savior.

I pray that each of us *would* indeed acknowledge him as Lord of our lives... our Master. And not just with words, and not even just with our actions – though that is better than with words only. It’s those two things, but also let’s acknowledge him as Lord of our hearts...our whole lives. **Let’s demonstrate His Lordship in our lives.** In fact, if you read the “Message” translation of the Bible, “Adonai” and “Kurios” are both translated as “Master”. And I love that translation because, as I said at the start of the message: “Lord” has almost lost its meaning for us. “Master” reminds us that we belong to God: Heart, mind, and soul. May we each know to whom we belong. We are His! The God of Creation – Elohim – is the Lord of creation as well...He is Adonai and Kurios...and we live as God intends when He is truly Lord of our lives. Like Isaiah, we simply say, “Here am I. Send me!” May it be so for each and every one of us this day, and always. Let’s pray...Amen.