

## **Adonai**

This article on Psalm 8 is taken from the Ligonier Ministries

Jewish people to this day will say “Adonai” whenever they see the tetragrammaton (YHWH) in the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament. But Adonai does not reflect the proper pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, it is in itself another one of the names for God in Scripture. In fact, it is one of the most frequently used names for the Creator in the entire Bible.

Adonai is typically translated into English as “Lord.” If we look at today’s passage, we see the English term repeated, but Adonai is not behind both uses of the term. Most translations of the Old Testament render yhwh with “Lord” (note the small capital letters) and Adonai as “Lord.” The passage really reads, “O Yahweh, our Adonai...”

If Yahweh reflects God’s faithfulness and self-existence, Adonai refers mainly to His sovereignty. Biblically speaking, sovereignty is related to the concepts of omnipotence and authority. When we say God is omnipotent we mean that He has all power to do whatever He purposes. The Lord allows His enemies to war against Him for now, but He is ultimately unstoppable and His might backs up His sovereignty. God can do whatever He pleases, and so He rules over all.

The biblical authors were well acquainted with the concept of authority, because they were familiar with monarchical rule. Most of the prophets and apostles lived in societies where the king was absolute and his word was law. Disobedience would mean imprisonment or worse. Kings most often exercised their authority through their royal decrees (2 Chron. 30; Est. 8; Dan. 3:29). These concepts are all inherent to the Lord’s sovereignty as well.

It is vitally important that we remember our Father’s sovereign authority today. He alone has the absolute right to define good and evil, and His decree (as found in Scripture) is the supreme law. We must not negotiate this point, for we live in a culture that wants to throw off all authority and define for itself what is right and wrong.

Finally, the title Lord for Jesus comes from the Greek Kurios, a translation of Adonai. Its frequent usage (Acts 7:59; Rom. 5:1; Heb. 13:20) is one of many indications of Jesus’ power and authority.

Our greatest temptation as Christians is to live as if Jesus is not the Lord of our lives. When the culture sets the agenda for our worship and ethics, it has become our lord. If we do not confess Christ in the face of hostility at home or in the workplace, we have walked away from the authority of God. It is therefore incumbent upon us to do all we can to recognize Jesus’ authority over everything. Take time to consider the fact that Christ is Lord over all.