

Text: Genesis 14; Genesis 17; Genesis 22

Theme: The names of God – El Elyon, El Shaddai, Jehovah Jireh.

Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi at the Healing and Anointing Service on 31st July 2011 at 10.30am.

Names are very important. In the African culture, names are so important that they conduct a “naming ceremony” to assign names to their children.

We are firstly going to consider one of the names that the Almighty God used for Himself in the Holy Bible. The Name we are considering first is “El Elyon”, literally, “God Most High.”

El Elyon (Genesis 14)

Abram’s nephew and other residents of Sodom had been kidnapped as slaves, a prize of war by a coalition of Macedonian kings that had conducted raids in the region. Abram gathered his men and conducted a night-time raid on the unsuspecting armies. He rescued both the kidnapped Sodomites as well as all the valuables that had been plundered from the city. On the road back to his home in Hebron, Abram comes to Salem, just south of present-day Jerusalem. That is where we pick up the story with Melchizedek’s visit to Abraham where the Name “El Elyon” is used repeatedly (see Genesis 14). In our Bibles, “El Elyon” is translated “God Most High.” From this passage of Holy Scripture, we learn three wonderful Truths about Almighty God: (1) “El Elyon” is Supreme; (2) “El Elyon” is Strong; and (3) “El Elyon” is Sovereign.

El Elyon is Supreme

The name or title “Elyon” emphasizes God’s uniqueness and his **supremacy** above all others. During the time Abram lived, his father was a worshiper of the moon. He thought the moon was God. These people had different kinds of gods and so it is significant to come back with this passage of scripture and notice that He said that He is the God Most High. This relates to the Supremacy of God.

Notice again, verses 18 & 19 of Genesis 14: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God [or God Most High]. And he blessed him, and said, ‘Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth:’” It reminds us that He is the Creator of heaven and earth and the Owner of all. He is not merely mighty, but Almighty. That’s the emphasis of Elyon.

El Elyon is Strong

Most High God, Elyon also means ‘Strong God’ or ‘Strength’. **El Elyon** therefore means ‘God is the **strong** God’. “‘And blessed be God **Most High**, who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything” (Genesis 14:20).

Do you catch the strength here? He is a God, who is Most High, who has delivered him from all of his enemies. When you think about your enemies, if you will remember that your solution is God and that God is the Supreme God, then your enemies come down in their size. Now it may not be good to say enemies, but any kind of opposition, any kind of difficulty that

you or I would be faced with at a particular time is not as big as our God. You see, we get our eyes fixed too much on trouble, too much on tribulation, and not enough on God.

Elyon is the Strongest. He is the Strongest of the Strong. No other is as great in power and possession. He is the ultimate God, the God of Gods, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and Abram gave him a tenth of everything!

El-Elyon is Sovereign

El Elyon means ‘God is the **Sovereign** God’. Genesis 14:21-23 (NAS): “And the king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.’ And Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have sworn to the LORD God **Most High**, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, “I have made Abram rich.””

If we boil all of that down, Abram was saying God is the Sovereign God. If I am made rich, it is going to be to the Glory of God. If I am made poor, it can still be to the Glory of God. Whatever happens, it is going to be the Sovereignty of God.

To me, the Sovereignty of God simply means that God is Boss, He is Lord. He doesn’t have to ask you or I or anybody else for anything. He has everything. He is sufficient within Himself to do everything that He wants to do. My God is so Sovereign He can give me a choice and still know what I’m going to do.

He is the one who is to be held highest and in the most esteem. Here we find Abram saying, ‘I will not take a thread or a sandal thong because I don’t want you to come back and say, “well, I made Abram rich.”’ (Genesis 14:23). Abram knew the Sovereign God made him what he was.

Billy Graham 50 years ago was like any other young, travelling evangelist. But when he came to Los Angeles, his crusade began to develop and expand as the hand of God was obviously upon him. Mr. William Randolph Hearst, a newspaper mogul of his day, went to hear him preach. When he returned he instructed his newspaper to promote Billy Graham – to give him the utmost of coverage. The news media sent it all over the United States and Billy Graham became known to all of America.

Years later someone remarked, ‘well, the newspapers made Billy Graham,’ but a wise and intelligent person responded, ‘OK then, let’s see you make another one. Let’s see you make another one.’ Do you see the Sovereignty of God? Why did Hearst decide to be there? Why did Hearst respond to his campaign with “Puff up Graham”, “Give him ultimate coverage”? God wanted it done and he got it accomplished. He is the Sovereign God.

The Name “El Elyon” designates God as being above every position of authority in heaven and in earth, higher than the greatest monarchs who have ruled mighty empires in the past; higher than the most powerful politicians and presidents of today’s modern world!.

How comforting it is to know that in our troubled world, the Most High God is still ruling and overruling all things - He is still in total and absolute control! Rulers may propose whatever they wish but, the Most High God will dispose, according to His Sovereign Will, which will, indeed, prevail! I’m sure you remember when Pontius Pilate was trying to question Jesus

Christ, before the crucifixion. In John 19:10-11 Pilate insinuated that he had the power to crucify or release Jesus. However, in Jesus' reply, He told Pilate that unless power was given to him from above, from God Most High, he, Pilate, could do nothing. The Name "El Elyon" is a name that speaks of God's supreme exaltation above all earthly authority.

Read Genesis 14:17-20. When Melchizedek blessed Abram, he opened his eyes to an amazing vision of God's character. Your Lord, El Elyon is the God Most High, the creator of the entire universe. Everything in it belongs to Him – all wealth, cattle, possessions. He is in control of everything you see around you. Now, Abram was convinced that El Elyon has everything under His control. That's why he immediately made an oath: 'From now on, I'm going to trust only El Elyon to meet all my needs. If the Lord creates and possesses all things, then, I won't accept a single shoelace from this Sodomite society. I am going to put my life, my family and my future totally into God's care. You offer me trinkets, Sodom, when my God owns the universe. No! I will not take anything from you lest you think you are the one who has made me rich.' Hebrews 13:8 tells us that our God is the same yesterday, today and forever!

God was there with the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace and they did not burn. It took a heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, who ordered that they should be thrown into the furnace, to recognise that they were servants of the Most High God (El Elyon), as only He could perform such a feat (Daniel 3:26).

Are you able to face the storms, the furnace, tests and trials in your walk, calmly testifying, "My God, El Elyon, God Almighty has everything under control"? Do you trust His power to see you through when you cannot see the way very clearly?

'If He is the Most High then what is His perspective on the problems in my life?' Wow! The God of all glory has all under His control even the darkest secrets of men's hearts and in the most difficult times of all our story is not hidden from His power and glory. This is the Father we all worship, who has called us to hide under His pavilion. Yes he truly is the El Elyon. No one can ward off His hand, and no one can question what He does. How should this affect my worship? How should it affect my prayers?

Paul was really short of words as he grappled with the greatness of God and he burst out saying, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became his counsellor? Or who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again?... from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him is the glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36).

El Shaddai: The Lord God Almighty (Genesis 17)

Armed with his new discovery that God is El Elyon, the Most High God, Abram now challenged the Lord in Genesis 15:3. It's as if he said, 'Lord, I know you are El Elyon, creator and possessor of all things. So, where is my promised child? You said I would be the father of many nations. Yet here I am, still childless after these [24] years.'

At this point of crisis in his life, God revealed Himself to Abram as the "Almighty God" (Genesis 17:1). The literal meaning of this name is 'God, all-powerful and all sufficient'. It's as if God is saying to Abram, 'Abram, you already know that I have power over every

condition in your life and that I am in control of all things – that there are no accidents in your life, no situations that are merely fate or luck. I am the Head. Now I am going to tell you something else about my nature that you need to understand. I am not only in control of all things, but I also keep my word. When I say something is going to be done, it's already done. Nothing can stop my promise. I am El Shaddai – all powerful, the Strong One, all sufficient keeper of my promises, One that is able to do anything! I guarantee my word.'

Theologians have a term for Almighty God's Power; and, that term is "Omnipotent", meaning that there is nothing that Almighty God cannot do - He is God Almighty! Because He is God Almighty, there is no person that He cannot save, there is no problem that He cannot solve, and, there is no prayer that He cannot answer if He so chooses to act. He can do whatever He chooses to do and, what is more, no one can stop Him! Almighty God can open doors that no one else can shut - Almighty God can close doors that no one else can open! It was El Shaddai who was with David when he traded words with Goliath before their contest. David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty (El Shaddai)" (1 Samuel 17:45). The rest of the story you know. Goliath was killed by David with a stone and his head cut off with his own sword. (See 1 Samuel 17).

Matthew records these words: "Jesus came and told His disciples, 'I have been given complete authority in Heaven and on earth'" (Matthew 28:18). Now, if Jesus, the Christ, has "complete authority," how much authority does that leave for us? You are absolutely right - none! We have no authority or power of our own - we must rely on "El Shaddai" who has all authority and power!

So, how do we respond to that Truth revealed to Abram in Genesis 17:1? Almighty God gives us the answer: "serve Me faithfully and live a blameless life!" Almighty God is saying, in effect, 'Since I am God Almighty, you should walk before Me and live a life that is worthy of Me!' If Almighty God is an infinite God, and He is, then the least we can do as finite beings is to serve Him and live for Him! Why would anyone not want to serve someone who has all Power?

In verse 3 we read: "Abram fell face down in the dust." When Abram came face to face with the God that is able to do anything, he fell before Him in adoration and worship! When I think of God as being the Almighty God; a God that has unlimited, inconceivable, unending and, undeniable Power, I am overwhelmed with His greatness and I find myself with a strong desire to bow down and worship Him.

Not only did Almighty God reveal Himself in a new Name but He also gave Abram a new name. In verse 5 (NLT): "What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations." Almighty God had revealed Himself as a God of Power. Here we see Abram receiving and experiencing that Power in his life!

The name "Abram" means "father of many." Now, pause and think for just a moment. Who, if anybody, had a more ridiculous name by human standards than Abram? The father of many? He only had one son, Ishmael, and that son was not his legitimate heir. You talk about a name that didn't fit - Abram was it. You might say, 'He sure needed a name change!' Well, Abram got his name change however, it was about as ridiculous as his original name. Abraham means "father of multitudes." God saw that Abram was focussing on all the

impossibilities of his situation. Abram could not see past his age, his dried up body and Sarah's dead womb. So God specifically revealed himself to Abram as the God who gives life to the dead.

The name just didn't seem to fit and what was worse, from a human perspective, is that it didn't look like it would ever fit. Abram was 99 years old and on top of that his wife, Sarai, was no spring chicken either. She was 90 years old. It would be fair to say of both Abram and Sarai that the possibility of them having children was next to none. For them to have children would be nothing short of a miracle!

The late great Baptist theologian and President, from 1915 to 1942, of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Fort Worth, Texas, Dr. Lee R. Scarborough, was preaching on the story of Jonah and the big fish, sometimes called 'Jonah and the Whale!' When he got home, his son said to him, "Daddy, do you believe that a fish could swallow a man and keep him alive for three days and three nights?" This great man of God sat his son down and said, "Well, now son, let me ask you a question. If Almighty God could make a man to begin with, out of absolutely nothing and, if Almighty God could make a fish to begin with, out of absolutely nothing son, don't you believe that Almighty God could make a fish that could keep a man alive for three days and three nights?" The little fellow said, "Well, if you're going to bring God into it that's different!"

When we bring "El Shaddai" into the picture, when we bring "El Shaddai" into our situations and what at first seems impossible now becomes the possible! God was adding His mighty breath or Spirit to Abram's name! And that Spirit who gave life to the created Adam who was lifeless was giving life to Abram's dead body. The difference between fruitfulness and fruitlessness is not human ability but it is Divine Power that makes the difference. Abraham had already learned the folly of doing things in the flesh; Ishmael was a daily reminder. Now, he was learning how to do things by Almighty God's Spirit. We are a generation of people who rely largely on what the flesh can do. We pump, we prime, we push and we pull to get things done and yet, we are fruitless! The secret of fruitfulness is doing things by Almighty God's Spirit, with Almighty God's Power upon us!

The third new name we see in Genesis 17 is that of Sarai's. Notice in Genesis 17:15 (NLT): "Then God added, 'Regarding Sarai, your wife - her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah.'" "Sarah" means "princess." It was the indication that she, Sarah would become the mother of kings therefore, it was only right that she be called "princess".

It was Sarah that would be the one in which the Power of Almighty God would be experienced. Her dead, barren body, would live and be fruitful by the Power of Almighty God. It is my personal belief, that each and every one of us can experience Almighty God's Power in our lives. I believe that Almighty God wants to make Himself known in each and every one of us. Many Christian believers are 'spiritual paupers' when they could be 'spiritual princes' and 'spiritual princesses'! Sarah would not only experience God's Power but she would serve throughout history ("His Story") as an example of what Almighty God can do in a person's life.

What friend or family member do you know right now that is not in a relationship with Jesus, the Christ? Pray about it to El Shaddai. What problem are you dealing with right now? What about your job? What about your family? What about people you know who are hurting? Take it to El Shaddai. El Shaddai is a God with undeniable, unlimited and unmatched Power!

What is there in your life that is a testimony to the Power of Almighty God? What is there in your church that is a demonstration of El Shaddai? If there is nothing, then, pray for a new name! The realization that you and I must come to, is that El Shaddai can take that which was once useless and turn it into a mighty force for His cause. And you know what is even more amazing? You don't have to clean up what you messed up! Just believe that He will do what He says He will do and then, let Him do it.

Has Almighty God revealed Himself to you as "El Shaddai" yet? Have you received Him and His Will for your life? Have you come to the realization that El Shaddai can take your life just as you are, just as it is right now, and turn it into what He created it to be? Almighty God, El Shaddai, is here for you now just waiting for you to turn to Him with open arms. If you haven't done that yet, won't you do it today, right where you are and right now?"

Jehovah Jireh (Genesis 22:1-14)

We often discover more of our loving Father's nature during our difficult times. It was during Sodom's crisis that God revealed himself to Abram as El Elyon, God Most High, creator and possessor of all things. Likewise, it was during Abram's crisis of doubt that God revealed his name as El Shaddai – God all powerful and all sufficient. Now God was leading Abraham into the greatest crisis any human being could ever experience – the sacrifice of his own child. And out of this crisis, Abraham would receive the greatest revelation he could ever know of the heavenly Father.

Imagine Abraham's feelings when the Lord told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Think of what went through his mind when they climbed Mount Moriah and Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb?" Yet Abraham had faith that God would provide, and he assured Isaac of his confidence. He must have remembered the Lord's revelation of Himself as El Elyon, creator of all things. Therefore, it would be a small matter for God to raise up Isaac from the dead. In addition, Abraham believed in El Shaddai – God all sufficient, the one who keeps his word. The Lord has already assured him, 'I have given you a son, Abraham. And you are going to see entire nations come out of him'. He was acting on faith founded solely on God's revealed promises.

Abraham's heart must have pounded as he stood on Mount Moriah with his son Isaac. He had offered many sacrifices during his lifetime, but this one was different. God was asking him to place his promised son on the altar and yet retain his confidence in God's love and integrity.

When it was clear that Abraham was ready to slay Isaac, an angel stopped him and provided a ram instead. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns...And Abraham called the name of that place 'Jehovahjireh'....." (Genesis 22:11-14). Abraham had totally surrendered his all to the Lord. And his son Isaac was returned to him.

Here we see a glorious new discovery of God's nature. He revealed himself to Abraham as Jehovah Jireh – "the Lord who sees or God will see to it or God will provide."

This last revelation of God has been greatly misunderstood. Many people see God as a provider of material things but he is much more than that. In many ways, this scene foreshadows the event of the cross. Isaac, the sacrificial son, carried wood up a hill, just as God's own son, Jesus would do. And Abraham willingly offered up his son as a sacrifice for

sin just as the heavenly Father would do. Moreover, during the three-day journey, Abraham considered his son as already being dead. Yet, when it was finished, Isaac emerged from the trip as if he'd been raised from the dead.

God was beginning a church, a nation of faith through this event. He was not interested in human sacrifice. Faith in him must go with submission.

This idea of total submission is illustrated in the animal world. When two wolves fight over a territorial boundary, the conflict ends in an unusual way. When one animal realizes he can't win, he indicates surrender by exposing the underside of his neck to the teeth of his adversary. For some unexplainable reason, the victor does not kill him. Instead, he allows the conquered to go free.

We must be willing to give to Christ what is most precious to us. He wants more than our spare time and leftover possessions - He wants to be Lord of everything in our lives. Only when we are willing to let go of what we love the most can we experience the freedom that comes by yielding to Him. Surrender is the secret to life at its best!

We need to remember that our duty is to obey God's commands. His duty is to keep His promises. In God's way of doing things, those two things never conflict. It is easy to make a profession of faith. But the real test comes when God asks us to lay our dearest treasures on the line. As with Abraham, the issue becomes one of obedience. A businesswoman lost a high-paying job because she wouldn't compromise her standards. And a pastor was driven from his church when he obeyed God's Word and spoke out about racism in his congregation. Shouldn't these people have been rewarded when they did the right thing? Faith meets its toughest test when we feel that the Lord has not rewarded our faithfulness.

Faith like Abraham's is not born in a day. It's the result of years of seeing God's faithfulness to His promises, and it grows as we daily choose to believe what He says.