

What is His Name?
El Elyon – The Most High God
Colossians 1:15-20
(Grace – July 11, 2010)

I. Introduction

“For you, O Lord, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.”
(Psalm 97:9, NIV)

Last week, we looked at God as El Elyon, God Most High.

Richard L. Strauss wrote, “It should not be any problem for us to admit that God is the highest and greatest being there is. If He is the eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient, unchanging Spirit, all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere, it is obvious that He stands alone, above all. No one can equal Him. If anyone existed before Him or is more powerful than He is or knows more than He knows, if He needs anyone else to complete Him, then that one would be God rather than the One we know as God. But that idea is ridiculous. There is only one true and living God, and in order for Him to be God He must be the highest and greatest. The very name by which he revealed Himself to Nebuchadnezzar shows that He is. He called Himself the Most High God, that is, the exalted One, lifted far above all gods and men.”

It is in knowing God as the Most High God, El Elyon, that we acknowledge His strength, **supremacy**, and sovereignty over our own lives and the affairs of humanity.

“For the Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King of all the earth.” (Psalm 47:2, NLT)

Because God is the Most High over all creation, He *“causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”* (Romans 8:28, NLT)

Sometimes this works in more humorous ways as related by Dwight Nelson in a (supposedly) true story about the pastor of his church.

He had a kitten that climbed up a tree in his backyard and then was afraid to come down. The pastor coaxed, offered warm milk, etc. The kitty would not come down. The tree was not sturdy enough to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car and drove away so that the tree bent down, he could then reach up and get the kitten.

He did! All the while, checking his progress in the car frequently, he figured if he went just a little bit further, the tree would be bent sufficiently for him to reach the kitten. But as he moved a little further forward, the rope broke. The tree went “boing!” and the kitten instantly sailed through the air-out of sight.

The pastor felt terrible. He walked all over the neighborhood asking people if they'd seen a little kitten. No. Nobody had seen a stray kitten. So he prayed, “Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping,” and went on about his business.

A few days later he was at the grocery store, and met one of his church members. He happened to look into her shopping cart and was amazed to see cat food. Now this woman was a cat hater and everyone knew it, so he asked her, “Why are you buying cat food when you hate cats so much?” She replied, “You won't believe this,” and told him

how her little girl had been begging her for a cat, but she kept refusing. Then a few days before, the child had begged again, so the Mom finally told her little girl, "Well if God gives you a cat, I'll let you keep it."

She told the pastor, "I watched my child go out in the yard, get on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And really, Pastor, you won't believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. A kitten suddenly came flying out of the blue sky, with its paws outspread, and landed right in front of her!"

On a more serious note: if we surrender all of our pain, tragedy and circumstances to Him, He will use them to refine us, heal us, and make us more like Jesus for His glory.

To hear a bit more about that, you can go back and listen to last week's message on our web site.

II. El Elyon – God Most High

Over the next few weeks, I would like to consider with you what it means to you and me that God is El Elyon, the Most High God.

Because God is the Most High God, He rules over:

- A. All the inhabitants of heaven and earth
- B. Our past, our present, and our future
- C. The rise and fall of nations
- D. Life and death
- E. Blessing and disaster

Let's begin to look at these in a bit more detail.

- A. God rules over all the inhabitants of **heaven** and **earth**.

"He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (Colossians 1:15-20, NIV)

- 1. God rules over and is far above **all** the heavenly beings, including **satan**.

The devil is not sovereign. He cannot be everywhere at once like our El Elyon. Although he is a powerful heavenly being, he is limited to God's permissive will.

His only access to our lives comes either when we violate God's principles and give the enemy power over us, or when God specifically allows testing into our lives for His purposes and glory.

That we can give the devil authority in our lives is made clear in the following passage: “...do not give the devil a foothold.” (Ephesians 4:27, NIV)

I do not know how many of you have been rock climbing, but the need for a foothold is critical. You cannot reach the top of the cliff without one.

When you are in Christ, the devil is hanging by his fingernails, but always looking for that foothold.

We give him that foothold whenever we believe his lies instead of the truth and when we sin. [explain]

If you are ever tempted to think that God and the devil are two equal forces fighting for supremacy, just remember how God is going to deal with satan in the end.

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. 2 He seized the dragon—that old serpent, who is the devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years. 3 The angel threw him into the bottomless pit...” (Revelation 20:1-3, NLT)

Who binds the devil and throws him into the bottomless pit? An unnamed angel. God does not even bother to do it Himself.

There are times when for His own purpose and glory God allows the devil to test us.

The story of Job clearly portrays this as do the words of Jesus to Peter in Luke 22:31-32: *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. 32 But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.”* (NLT)

Just remember, sometimes we bring this upon ourselves (we believe the lies or we are engaged in sin) and at other times we are to *“...patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind.”* (2 Corinthians 6:4, NLT)

Whatever we are facing we need to continually remind ourselves that *“...by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”* (Colossians 1:16-17)

2. God rules over and is the head of the **church**.

“And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” (Colossians 1:18)

I have found that it is easy to be critical of the church. And in all honesty the church has done a pretty horrible job of representing who Christ is to the world. We fight with each other over

ridiculous things and we often do not clearly reflect the command of God to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

As a result, many have given up on the church. Others may still come, but only out of obligation, not really understanding the mystery of who we are, and how God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world through us, the church.

In our efforts to make the church better, we as leaders read lots of books, go to seminars, try new programs, implement the next new idea.

While the effort and desire to do church better should be applauded, I am convinced that what we need more than anything is to make sure we are properly “attached” to the head – to the person of Jesus Christ!

Jesus prayed, *“that they (those who believe) will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. **And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.**”* (John 17:21, NLT)

It is as we surrender to Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the church and El Elyon of the universe, that we will experience a greater level of **fruitfulness** for His glory in and through the church.

I recently read a book that said that if we did not make drastic changes, the church would not survive one more generation.

While I do not deny our need to make some changes, a statement like that appears to deny that God is the Head of His body, the church.

Whatever changes we do make need to come from the Head of the body, since we will only know these things as we “remain in Him” who is El Elyon, God Most High, over all things, including the church.

Archbishop William Temple wrote in 1930: While we deliberate, God reigns; when we decide wisely, God reigns; when we decide foolishly, God reigns; when we serve God in humble loyalty, God reigns; when we serve God self-assertively, God reigns; when we rebel and seek to withhold our service, God reigns -- the Alpha and the Omega, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (Archbishop William Temple. Quoted in "Context," February 1, 1992)

“God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. 23 And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.” (Ephesians 1:22-23, NLT)

“God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 3:10, NLT)

Now this is the kind of church I want to be a part of!

III. Conclusion

We will continue to look at what it means for God to be El Elyon when I return from my backpacking trip, but let me conclude today with this final passage of Scripture.

“And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord (your El Elyon), you must continue to follow him. 7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. 8 Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. 9 For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. 10 So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.” (Colossians 2:6-10, NLT)