

EL ELYON: THE MOST HIGH GOD

On August 5, 2010, 33 Chilean miners were trapped 2300 feet underground in a copper and gold mine just outside of a small town called Copiapó. A cave-in confined the men in a dark place with no way out. They were imprisoned in a seemingly impenetrable fortress of rock.

For more than two weeks, rescuers heard nothing at all from the trapped miners. It is bad enough to be in a pit, but it is even worse when you can't get out and you don't see anyone who can help you. The men couldn't help each other out of this pit. They were stuck together, sitting, sleeping, hungry, cold...and sometimes without hope. They were helpless and desperate. If they were going to be saved, help would have to come from above.

Finally, after 17 days, rescuers found a note taped to one of their drill bits—the miners were alive. The rescuers drilled a larger hole down through the earth, inserted a small tube, and provided the miners with food, water, light, medicine, and communication equipment. The hole did not deliver them, but it gave them hope.

Perhaps today you find yourself in a similar circumstance. Life has caved in on you spiritually, financially, relationally, or emotionally. You see no way out. Like the trapped miners, you aren't even sure anyone up above even knows where you are. Of course, knowing God's names doesn't automatically or immediately change all of life's negative realities. Christians still face the same troubles everyone else does (John 16:33). But knowing God intimately through His names does provide a sustaining hope in the darkest of times. Hope comes through the knowledge that God is true to His name and aware of our plight, working on our behalf for good. No matter how dark the situation, we don't have to throw in the towel because He is faithful to His name. He will sustain us until He either changes our situation in history or delivers us in eternity.

The miners were finally freed when a two-foot-wide capsule called the Phoenix lifted them one by one from their prison. All 33 were saved. After they had been set free, one of the trapped miners said they had gathered as a group in the pit and called on God to rescue them. They appealed to His name and the character attached to it.

Without Hope

You don't have to be trapped 2300 feet underground to find yourself in a hopeless situation. The citizens of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah found themselves without food and supplies just as those Chilean miners did in their pit. An evil king named Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and three other power-hungry kings faced off against five other kings who were seeking to defend their livelihood, countrymen, and homes. Two of the five defending kings represented the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

They waged war in the valley of Siddim, which was riddled with tar pits. As the battle escalated, the five defensive kings began to retreat. The two from Sodom and Gomorrah fell into the tar pits. Their people were taken captive, and all their possessions were confiscated. Abram's nephew, Lot, was one of the prisoners.

Scripture wastes no time in highlighting Abram's courageous rescue mission.

Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. (Genesis 14:14-16).

Abram made it clear that no one was to mess with his people. Rounding up the best men he could find, he took on the responsibility to fight the battle and quickly recover what had been stolen in war. With 318-trained men, he chased down the enemy a full 240 miles—without a vehicle. Whatever it took to get back what had been wrongfully stolen, Abram did it. Even though the odds were against him—just as the odds were against the Chilean miners trapped underground—Abram held out hope of recovering it all.

Peace

The story of this battle, defeat, and rescue serves as the backdrop for the name of God introduced to us in this chapter of Genesis. After the king of Sodom had been released from the confederation of armies that had attacked, he came to Abram in a place called the King's Valley. He brought with him another king named Melchizedek (Genesis 18). Melchizedek was the king of Salem. Translated, the name Salem aligns with the Hebrew word shalem, which means "peace." A derivative of shalem is shalom, which means "complete," "sound," "content," and "peace." In fact, most Jewish commentators concur that Salem is Jerusalem, "the city of peace."

This king of peace brought bread and wine to Abram. He came as the priest of El Elyon, God Most High (verse 18), and blessed Abram.

And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. (Genesis 14:19-20).

To this, Abram replied and acknowledged El Elyon by saying, *"But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth,"* (verse 22).

When we look at the meaning of the name El Elyon, we need to remember that El is the abbreviated form of Elohim. Elohim is the name given to God in creation, referring to His power. "In the beginning, [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth." When El is combined with Elyon, the compound connection refers to God as the highest or as the most. It is literally translated as the Most Exalted High God. *(Psalm 57:2 I will cry out to God Most High, To God who performs all things for me.).*

So what exactly causes the introduction of this name of God as one who is higher than anyone else? A battle of nine human kings—four against five. The kings most likely thought they were each rather high up. And in the world's definitions of worth, power, and might, they actually were. But when God got into the fight—when El Elyon stepped in the ring—318 men who had

traveled 240 miles by foot were able to take back what the oppressors had stolen. This is because when God enters the fight, He truly is the Most High, not only of heaven but also of earth.

Why is this truth so important to us today? What is the significance of the character of this name? Well, most likely there are people in your life who are sitting pretty high. Perhaps they are high up in worldly position. Maybe they have a higher rank than you do. It could be that they're higher in the amount of money or possessions they own. Or they could have higher recognition, power, or perceived influence than you have. Yet what I want you to remember is that no matter how high they are, El Elyon is higher still. El Elyon is the maker of heaven and earth. People who appear to be higher than you are users of heaven and earth. They don't call the shots. They don't have the final say. No one is higher than El Elyon. He puts everyone in his or her place.

When people or powers seek to intimidate you, your recourse is to call on the name of El Elyon. Know that there is always someone higher, stronger, and more influential than they are. No circumstance intimidates Him—not the tar pits of Genesis 14, and not the mines of Copiapó. Knowing the name El Elyon and what it means helps you to understand that you're never to elevate people, places, or circumstances above their appropriate level. No one but God is to be your final court of appeals. He is the one who has the final say—so. Man may have a say—your boss, the doctor, your kids, your spouse, your banker—but El Elyon has the final say.

El Elyon means that God has the right to overrule. In Abram and Lot's case, God used 318 men to overpower a collection of kings and their armies. The numbers weren't in Abram's favor. Neither were the circumstances. Yet 318 men plus one El Elyon is more than enough to defeat humanity's biggest armies because El Elyon is the God who is Most High over heaven and earth.

Never look at your odds first. The odds won't give you the final story. Never focus on the size of your problem. Rather, focus on the size of your God. David had only five smooth stones, and he needed only one to defeat the giant before him. Abram had 318 men going up against four kings and their adrenaline-high, victory-shouting armies. But he also had El Elyon, which is more than enough to win any battle. You are to respect your boss, spouse, circumstances, banker, doctor, and so on. But you are to never view them as El Elyon because they do not possess heaven and

earth. When you lift someone else or some other situation higher than God, you create an idol. An idol isn't just a carved object to be worshipped with candles burning and incense. No, an idol is anything you elevate above the one true God.

Sharing God's Glory

Abram's fundamental understanding of God's character, holiness, and might is illustrated at the end of the story. Following Melchizedek's blessing and Abram's response—he gave Melchizedek a tenth (a tithe)—a revealing verbal exchange occurs between the king of Sodom and Abram.

Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'— except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." (Genesis 14:21-24).

The king of Sodom ruled one of the nations that Abram had delivered. Of course, the king was pleased with what Abram had done. Most likely, he was impressed by Abram's persistence and ability. Knowing Abram was a force with which to be reckoned, he sought to strike a deal. He asked Abram to give him the people he had recovered, and in exchange, Abram could keep all of the money. He and his men could profit from the rescue.

The first problem with this pitch is that the king of Sodom had somehow forgotten that he had lost the battle himself. He had forgotten he had been captured by a confederation of kings. So when Abram delivered him, he sought to make a deal—to split the victory down the middle when the victory didn't belong to him at all. Abram had just rescued the king and his people, and he didn't think this was a time for negotiation. He knew the king wanted the credit. He knew the king wanted to parade the captured people back into his city so he could claim them as servants and slaves. Abram knew this king wanted some of the glory that belonged to God alone.

Scripture tells us in Isaiah 42:8, *"I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another."* Yet that is exactly what Satan often tries to get us to do. He seeks to cut a deal with

you just as the king of Sodom sought to cut a deal with Abram. In this deal, he entices you with a piece of God's glory. God's victories turn into joint ventures—partnerships in which you can share the credit. So adamant was Abram against the king of Sodom stealing any of God's glory, he told him that he wouldn't even take "a thread or a sandal strap" just so the king couldn't claim that he had contributed to Abram's success. El Elyon had won the battle, and El Elyon would receive the praise due Him.

A Priest and a King

Unlike the king of Sodom, the king of Salem understood who had won the battle for Abram. As we saw earlier in his blessing to Abram, he made that point perfectly clear. We read, *"And blessed be God Most High [El Elyon], who has delivered your enemies into your hand" (Genesis 14:20).*

Melchizedek was more than a king. He was also a priest. A priest's job is to stand between God and the people and be the point of communication from God to the people and from the people back to God again. The priest is the in-between person, or mediator. As both priest and king, Melchizedek made it clear that the 318 trained men who traveled more than 240 miles weren't the ones who turned defeat into victory. They were not the source of deliverance at all. However, they were the resource of deliverance. The difference between the two is enormous, yet few Christians truly grasp this truth and live it out on a daily basis.

My understanding of this spiritual principle of the Source versus the resource came to me in my late in my life, through more studying of God's Word. It made a revolutionary difference in my choices, my level of worry, and my planning. If you will fully grasp this truth, it will change everything for you: God is your Source. Everything else is a resource. Melchizedek highlighted this when he pointed out that Abram conquered his enemies because El Elyon had delivered them into his hands. And El Elyon could deliver them into Abram's hands because of His name—the Most High God over heaven and earth.

The kings who were causing Abram and his relatives trouble were kings of earth. His problem was an earthly situation. Yet El Elyon owns both heaven and earth. That's why 318-trained men can look like 30,000-trained men in a battle against four kings and their armies. They can do so when they are accompanied by El Elyon. The principle is simply this: You only have one Source. And one of the worst things you or I could ever do is to treat a resource as if it were our Source. God is the owner, the Most High over all, so He is the possessor of everything in heaven and on earth. He is the Source. Everything else is merely a resource at His disposal.

That means that whatever resource in your life is messing with you, it doesn't have the last word. God can find another resource through which to bless you. He has more than one way to accomplish His purposes. Understanding the power of El Elyon is a freeing experience.

Situations and circumstances in life can have a similar effect. They seem to block our progress, and we can feel stalled on the path to our destiny. Like driving, somewhere and we run into a traffic jam. If we are stuck, we know that we can take another route to our destination. We don't have always take the same route to get to where we are going. For instance, the interstate is just one resource to get to our destination—it's not the only resource. Typically, there are many options to choose from to get where we need to go. In the same way, God has multiple options for getting you to your destiny even when things, situations, or people seem to stand in the way.

No one can truly block you from God's plan. No scenario can truly stop you—not when you're paired up with El Elyon. He knows the right path you can take if you will simply turn your eyes on Him and get them off the problems in front of you. A resource is merely the means God uses to provide whatever you need or do whatever He wants to do through you. With Abram, it was 318 men. For Gideon, it was 300 men. For the young boy with some hungry disciples and thousands of people wanting to eat, it was a sack lunch of fish and crackers. God has many resources. He is not tied to our finite understanding of the odds.

When El Elyon is your Source, anything that's blocking you is not your only resource. It may be the only resource you can see. You may look at your resources and conclude they're not enough to overcome the dire situation in front of you. But the possessor of heaven and earth can use your mustard-seed faith to move a mountain. As long as you think what you're seeing dictates your

destiny, then that which you can see is your idol—it is your El Elyon. Even your job isn't your source. Nor is your boss. If you get a layoff notice, if things don't work out as you had planned, if you don't get the promotion you thought was yours...God has a myriad of ways to provide for you, open doors for you, and lead you on His path for you. When you understand He is your Source, you don't need to fear what man says because man doesn't have the final say.

When Abram recognized God as the one who had delivered him and brought about the victory in the battle, Abram *"gave him [Melchizedek] a tenth of all" (Genesis 14:20)*. This was before the commandment of the tithe had even been given. Yet Abram instinctively gave a tenth as a visible, physical recognition that El Elyon owned it all. Abram responded this way because he had been blessed. The tithe was his response to all that God had already done. One of the reasons people seem to struggle with tithing is that they don't recognize what it means. To tithe is to demonstrate to God that He owns you—that you want Him to own you, to be responsible for you. It's an acknowledgment that He is your Source.

On June 11, 1963, Governor George Wallace and his police force stood on the steps of the University of Alabama to prevent two black students from entering. But the federal courts had already decided in the students' favor. Deputy US Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach and federal marshals arrived with the message, "Mr. Governor, step aside." Wallace replied passionately that he wasn't about to go anywhere. The National Guard stepped in, explaining that he could voluntarily move out of the way or they could forcibly move him. When those instructions had become clear, Wallace and his men backed down.

Wallace held the highest position in Alabama. However, the federal court was higher still, and it overruled Wallace. This higher authority opened the doors for not only the two black students but also for integration that ultimately spread across the college campuses in our country. That's a practical example of how even those who are considered high up must adjust when an even higher authority makes a decision. When heaven decides to move, everyone else needs to adjust. When El Elyon lays down a decision, it doesn't matter what anyone's title is down here—God will see His decision through, and He will make a way where there seems to be no way from a human point of view.

Jesus, the Great High Priest

I opened this lesson talking about the 33 Chilean miners who had been trapped 2300 feet beneath the ground. They had found themselves in a hopeless situation in which their circumstances and the rocks caving in around them seemed to dictate the outcome. Yet when help came from above, each of these men was lifted to safety through a metal transport system called the Phoenix. The Phoenix was named after a mythical birdlike creature that was said to have died and then been resurrected out of its own ashes. Lifting the miners out of the belly of the earth is about as close to a resurrection as humanity can muster.

Yet 2000 years ago, a true resurrection occurred out of the silent rocks that held a lifeless body in a cold cave. He had died after only 33 years on earth, crucified on a cross for a crime He didn't commit. But death couldn't keep Him in the ground. El Elyon Himself raised Jesus up in order to give each of us an opportunity to receive eternal life. Because of His resurrection out of a hopeless situation, we now have hope. Because of His life, we now have life as well.

Hebrews tells us even more about the role Jesus plays in bringing us to the Father. *“And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” (Hebrews 5:9-10).*

What is this order of Melchizedek? A few chapters later, we're given insight into this man they called the king of Salem. *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. (Hebrews 7:1-3).*

Many people believe Melchizedek was a visible manifestation to humankind of God or a god in the Old Testament. After all, his name meant “king of righteousness” and “king of peace,” and he was also priest of the Most High God. He had neither mother nor father, but was “made like the Son of God.” And Jesus Christ is “according to the order of Melchizedek.” Jesus Christ is to

us what Melchizedek was to Abraham. He is our King of righteousness, our King of peace, and our Priest, who mediates between us and God the Father.

If your boss fires you, if your circumstances say you'll always be in debt, or if you wonder if you'll forever be single, remember to fix your eyes on Jesus. He can bring peace despite your desperate situation. He can bring hope in spite of the challenges. He can remind you that El Elyon doesn't need a lot to do a lot and that He can deliver your enemy into your hands.

But like Abraham, you need to align yourself underneath God's standard, operating by His authority and giving Him the glory that's due His name. You need to always remember that you have one Source, and He *"is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us," (Ephesians 3:20)*. After all, He is the High and Mighty God, the possessor of heaven and earth.

Those of us that still eat at McDonald's know that they ask if you want to supersize your order. They want to know if you want more than the regular serving. Similarly, God wants to know whether you simply want to settle for regular living or you want a supersized experience with Him. El Elyon is God supersized in your life.