

EL SHADDAI – THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GOD

Genesis 17:1-8

INTRODUCTION

- Many godless people hold a disdainful view of Christianity, saying, “Religion is a crutch, something that only weak people need to get them through life”
- But there is truth in what they say – we *are* weak and needy, and we’re deluding ourselves if we think we can pass through life, and death, without God
- Sooner or later those same people, when a crisis befalls them, will be looking for a “crutch” to support them
- One of the most important lessons we must learn – and that very few people actually learn – is our own weakness and insufficiency, and our need of God
- Our forefathers understood this, opening the Australian Constitution with the words, “humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God”
- In 1999, John Howard attempted to amend the preamble to the Constitution with the words: “With hope in God”
- This is quite different “humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God”
 - ✓ No humility
 - ✓ No reliance
 - ✓ No blessing of God
 - ✓ A generic “god” instead of the Biblical Almighty God
- God performs his works according to his character

- If we would know *why* God does what he does, we need to study his character that moves him to do it
- And one of the ways we know his character is through the names he has revealed to us
- Few of the names of God are as expressive of God's character as the name El Shaddai
- El Shaddai is the Almighty One who abundantly satisfies our needs
- Shaddai is derived from the root "shad", meaning "breast", which is a descriptive metaphor presenting God as the one who nurtures, feeds and nourishes from his inexhaustible supply and out of his benevolent heart
- Both "Shaddai" (Almighty) and "shad" (breast) are used in Genesis 49:25 where Jacob blesses Joseph
- "El Shaddai, God all-sufficient, is a word including not merely the thought of might, but the thought of wisdom, the thought of all resource; it describes God as the fount of all being and all manifestations, the last, final, ultimate fact out of which everything has proceeded, and of which everything in some form or fashion or sense, is an exhibition, a revelation."
(G Campbell Morgan)
- It is consistently translated as "Almighty" which gives the basic sense of God's omnipotence, but the divine power in the name Shaddai is his *bountiful power*, particularly towards his beloved saints who, like Abram, walk in faith and obedience
- "Shaddai" is found 48 times in the OT – 8 times as "El Shaddai" and 40 times as "Shaddai"
- It occurs 31 times in the book of Job

- In the New Testament there are about 10 instances where the equivalent name is used (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 16:14; 19:6)
- El Shaddai shows us that God is not only powerful and capable to meet all our needs, he is *willing* to do so
- This glorious Name has the power to calm every fear, remove every doubt, still every anxiety, lift every burden, and satisfy every need
- While studying the Hebrew definitions of this Name is instructive, we perceive the greater appreciation of it by looking at the context in which God first revealed it to Abram in Genesis 17

I. EL SHADDAI FULFILS HIS PROMISES

A. The promise delayed

1. Abram was 75 years old when God made his covenant with him and promised him a seed (Genesis 12:1-4)
2. About 10 years later God reiterated the promise to Abram in Genesis 15
3. At the age of 86, Abram took matters into his own hands and begat Ishmael through Hagar (Genesis 16:16)
4. By the time God appeared to Abram again in Genesis 17, he was 99 years old and Sarai was 89 years old
5. In this chapter God confirms his covenant to Abraham
 - a. Promising many nations would descend from him (4-6)
 - b. Changing Abram's name to Abraham (5)

- c. The duration of his covenant would be everlasting (7)
 - d. Promising the land of Canaan as his people's everlasting possession (8)
 - e. Instituting circumcision as a sign of the covenant (10-14)
- B. The Almighty God can do the impossible
- 1. It is in this context that God says to Abram, "I am the Almighty God" (1)
 - 2. The long years of waiting had tested Abram's faith, and when all seemed hopeless, God revealed himself to him as the Almighty, All-Sufficient God who would keep his promise
 - 3. Abram and Sarai had tried by their own wisdom and efforts to accomplish God's plan for him, and miserably failed
 - 4. But now, despite the apparent physical impossibility (Hebrews 11:12), Abram fully believed God (Romans 4:20) – his laughter was not of incredulity but of delight and joy (17)
 - 5. Whatever our need, whatever our problem, El Shaddai is sufficient to meet and overcome it

II. EL SHADDAI TRANSFORMS OUR LIVES

- A. A changed identity
- 1. Abram became Abraham (5)
 - a. Abram means "exalted father" and was his birth name given to him in Ur of the Chaldees

- b. God gave him a new name, Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude”
2. Sarai (“princess”) became Sarah (“mother of nations”) (16)
3. Those who come to trust and rely on the All-Sufficient God receive a new life, a new heart, a new walk, a new song, new promises and a new eternal destiny

B. He transforms the barren into the fruitful

1. Many of the occurrences of El Shaddai are connected with the blessing of fruitfulness
2. Isaac said to Jacob, “God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people” (Genesis 28:3)
3. God, when he changed Jacob’s name to Israel, declared, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins” (Genesis 35:10-11)
4. The aged Jacob pronounced his blessing upon Joseph, “...by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb” (Genesis 49:25)

C. He often uses chastening as his means of producing fruit in his people

1. The book of Job contains the bulk of the Scripture’s references to Shaddai, where God is held forth as being the One is Supreme over all, who blesses the righteous, judges the wicked, and chastens and tries his saints for their perfection (Job 5:17)

2. In Job's case, his trial ended with great blessing and fruitfulness, "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:12)
3. Naomi used the Name Shaddai when she complained of her bitter circumstances (Ruth 1:20-21)
 - a. She was right when she attributed the events that had befallen her to God's hand
 - b. She was wrong when she described God's dealings with her as "bitter", for though the medicine may have a bitter taste, the loving Hand that administers it holds no bitterness
 - c. Naomi, in choosing to refer to God by his Name Shaddai, may have been expressing a latent hope in her All-Sufficient God, who fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah, and who turned Job's captivity, could do the same for her
 - d. In the end Naomi indeed found that Shaddai would turn her bitterness into sweetness, as her daughter-in-law married Boaz who became ancestors of David and the Messiah
4. God is the Husbandman over his vineyard, and prunes the fruitful branches in order that they might be even more fruitful (John 15:2)

III. EL SHADDAI SATISFIES OUR NEEDS

- A. He meets our temporal and physical needs
 1. To all his creatures he is good and merciful and gives to all life and breath and all things (Psalm 145:9; Acts 14:17; 17:25)

2. Especially to his children, he promises to supply all our need (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19)

B. He meets our spiritual needs

1. The greatest need of man is to be freed from sin and its consequences, to be delivered from death and to be reconciled to God
2. The All-Sufficient El Shaddai met our need by sending his Son to take our place, to atone for our sins through his death upon the cross, and rising again the third day (1 Peter 3:18)
3. In order to supply us with pardon and eternal life, it required him to “become poor” (2 Corinthians 8:9), to “empty himself” (see Philippians 2:7)

C. Each Person of the Godhead, as El Shaddai, supplies and sustains the saints in the church

1. The Father – “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)
2. The Son – nourishes and cherishes the church (Ephesians 5:29; Colossians 2:19) and gives spiritual leaders unto the church (Ephesians 4:11-13)
3. The Holy Spirit empowers the church (Acts 1:8), directs the church (Acts 13:2,4) and gives gifts to the members of the church (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

CONCLUSION

1. To the unbeliever, the Almighty God is a fearful adversary who will in due time tread down the wicked in his fierceness and wrath (Revelation 19:15)

2. To the believer, the Almighty God is life, strength, protection
3. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High (El Elyon) shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Shaddai). I will say of the LORD (Jehovah), He is my refuge and my fortress: my God (Elohim); in him will I trust.” (Psalm 91:1-2)
4. Can you say you abide under El Shaddai’s shadow by faith and continual dependence upon him?
5. Abraham demonstrates what must be my response to El Shaddai:
 - ✓ Worship and revere him (Genesis 17:3)
 - ✓ Believe and trust him (Romans 4:19-22)
 - ✓ Walk before him in communion and obedience (Genesis 17:1; Micah 6:8)
 - ✓ Be holy in daily sanctification (Genesis 17:1; Matthew 5:48; Proverbs 4:18)