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**EL OLAM.**

The Hebrew word Olam means eternal. When you combine Olam with El, it means God Eternal or God of Eternity. Abraham did not really get to know God as El Olam until later in Genesis 21 when he planted a tree as a token of his agreement with Abimelech. Abimelech’s servants had seized some of Abraham’s land, including a very important well that Abraham had dug. When confronted by Abraham, Abimelech swore he knew nothing about it, and Abraham believed him. As proof that there weren’t any “hard feelings” between them, Abimelech proposed a treaty to which Abraham agreed. Abraham gave Abimelech sheep and cattle. Basically, Abraham bought back his land and well. Genesis 21:33 (NIV) “Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the LORD, the Eternal God.”

The name El Olam tells us…

**1. That God does not change.**

Although everything seems to be changing, and not for good; the name Olam helps us to know God as the Eternal God who does not change. We are living in a day when morals are declining, and standards of integrity are at an all-time low, but this name tells us that neither God nor His standards ever change.

name Yahweh-Sabaoth is not revealed until the Book of First Samuel. It took the Israelites a long time before they came to know God by this name. The Hebrew word, Sabaoth, means “armies”. It often has a military definition. It means that God is THE LORD OF ARMIES, THE LORD OF HOSTS.

Now, don’t think that this is implying that God is dormant or inactive. God can work in many different ways in your life. Most of the time God works in our life through the Bible, sometimes through our loved ones, our wives, sometimes through our children, and other times through friends or circumstances. God never changes and the endless ways He works in our lives never stop.

The name El Olam tells us…

**2. That God is the God of the past, present, and future.**

The name El Olam is used, to sum up, what Abraham learned about God in Genesis 21. First, Sarah asked Abraham to get rid of the slave woman Hagar and their son Ishmael. Abraham was probably shocked when God told him to send Hagar and Ishmael away. It seems cruel and unfair for God to command Abraham to do such a thing. The birth of Ishmael was the result of a lapse in faith on the part of Sarah and Abraham, not Hagar or Ishmael. Why then did God tell Abraham to send them away?

In Genesis 22, Abraham is going to be tested in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac- His only son of promise. The sending away of Ishmael was in preparation for this test of Abraham’s faith. Just imagine if Abraham still had Ishmael when it was time to offer Isaac. In his mind, he might have thought that even if he lost Isaac, he would still have Ishmael. The offering of Isaac would have required much less faith and would have had far less meaning. From Abraham’s vantage point, God certainly seemed unfair; but if Abraham was to be obedient, he had to come to know God as El Olam, the God of not only the past and present but also of the future.

When we look at things that happen to us in life only from the vantage point of the past and present, often God seems unfair. However, if we know Him as El Olam, we can understand that He has an essential and loving purpose for everything He allows to happen to us. When we are getting to know God as El Olam, it is very important for us to remember that we are to walk by faith, not by sight. Galatians 4:21-31 (NIV) 21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. 24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem because she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written:

“Be glad, barren woman,

you who never bore a child;

shout for joy and cry aloud,

you who were never in labor;

because more are the children of the desolate woman

than of her who has a husband.”

28 Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

30 But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.”[b] 31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

The Judaizers were teaching the believers in Galatia to trade their freedom in Christ for the bondage of the Law. It was a gospel of works. The Jews were prideful because of their physical descent from Abraham and in many cases believed the blessings God promised to Abraham were theirs exclusively. Paul explains that Ishmael represents the Old Covenant, the Law. Also, this passage says Ishmael represents those who are a part of Abraham’s family through physical birth, for his birth was entirely by natural means. On the other hand, Isaac was the child of promise. His birth was by means of a miracle. It is not natural birth that makes us a part of God’s covenant people; it is a miraculous birth.

Christians are the children of Abraham through spiritual birth. Ishmael was replaced by the son of promise, Isaac. Ishmael represents the age of the Law and Isaac represents the age of grace. This was all part of the plan of El Olam, the Eternal God. Abraham could not understand it, he just had to trust the future to God. Isaiah 40:28-31 (NIV) “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

The name El Olam tells us…

**3. That God can be trusted with all of your days.**

When Isaiah wrote these words, the Israelites were in a terrible place. The Assyrians had already captured many bordering nations, as well as Israel and much of Judah. Isaiah preached during this time of military threat to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He warned Judah’s king about making alliances with pagan kings rather than trusting in the Lord.

When you or your possessions are in danger, whom do you trust? Are you tempted to make shady deals or compromise your honesty? When you are discouraged by the drain of life, do you turn to sinful pleasures? When does your faith begin to fail with age, in whom do you trust? The secret to supernatural strength when our strength seems to be failing is to trust in the everlasting God, El Olam. If you know God as El Olam, you can wait on Him or trust Him with tomorrow. When you know Him as El Olam, it will renew your strength and as it does, you shall mount up with wings and soar like eagles. This means that through prayer you can turn the future over to Him and then you can soar above your difficulties. Soaring in the peace that passes all understanding is a matter of knowing God. Only when you, like Abraham, get to know the LORD as El Olam, the Eternal God, can you renew your strength and soar like an eagle above your problems.

**LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:**

1) Who is El Olam to you?

2) How does knowing God as El Olam impact your life, the way you live, and the way you worship?

3) How can you grow in your Christian walk by understanding God as El Olam?