



## Transcript Segment, Part 2

# “Praying the ‘Our Father’ with Jesus”

Presented by Michael Simone, S.J.

Let’s go on to, “who art in heaven.” This is not in the Lucan prayer. Luke’s version of the prayer doesn’t have this, so this is one of Matthew’s expansions, that God is in heaven. But it addresses the question, this verse and the next verse addresses the question, *where is God?* Where exactly is God located? So I think we take it for granted that God lives in heaven. Well, maybe we don’t take it for granted. This is what I learned and this is probably what’s still kicking around in my subconscious, is that God lives in heaven.

But in the ancient world, the locus of divine presence was more complex. Deities in heaven, certainly, but they also had places on Earth that were powerfully associated with them. I suspect . . . well, I’m not going to go on that tangent. So heaven and somewhere else. Now, much of this is described, I think, very well in this book by one of my own professors, P. Kyle McCarter, in his “Aspects of the Religion of Israel,” talks about the complexity of divine location and how God lives in heaven, certainly, but how that heavenly being could be available on earth to worshippers is something that’s worked out in a whole variety of forms in both the Hebrew Bible and in the religion of other peoples of the ancient Near East.

We have some answers in the Hebrew Bible to the question of heaven and what? One of them is heaven and the Temple. If you were to ask, in the popular mind of eighth-century Jerusalem, seventh-century Jerusalem, *where is God*, I suspect half of the people you asked would tell you he lives in the Temple. The Temple was known as the house of God. It was Beit Yahweh. That was not entirely a metaphor. There was a dining table placed out before God, every night, with bread on it, and with other utensils and cups, and presumably libations. God was fed a meal every night. If you come to the question of the sacrificial theology, he is described in a number of ways. “I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lofty,” presumably heavenly, “the hem of his robe filled the Temple.” There’s some piece of God that dangles down into the Temple. Ezekiel describes it a little differently when he’s having his Temple vision. He sees the bottom of God’s throne mystically above the Temple or within the Temple. It’s not entirely clear how he does that. So people who wanted to place God in the Temple had these theologically well-developed ways of describing that. This is not something that Jesus is particularly interested in, and I’ll get to that in a second as to why.

The other possibility which we see in First Kings 19:8 is Sinai. I meant to make a slide, I clearly didn’t. When EliS[(di)-2(dn)10.3(')6ec-13(E1/cl()-2 )-13(E)b.J [(W)6.3(h)103(h)1 g(n)10.4( F)]TJ 0.006 Tc.Waa6

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geographical words. Sinai just means shrub, so *Har Sinai* means shrub hill. Think of that next time you go past Mt. Sinai hospital, the Hebrew there is “shrub hill.” Horeb isn’t much more helpful. Horeb

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divine Presence. The speaking of God's name makes God's presence, the actions taken in God's name make God present, that somehow that God has given us his name is something that overcomes whatever distance there might be between earth and heaven.

Now, there were a lot of other options in the ancient world, and the most common one was the making of idols or images. How else do you make a god present? You make a deity present by making an image. The Greeks, of course, were masters at this. I think it was Praxiteles, his statue of Athena was, in the ancient world, thought to be the most beautiful thing on earth. This is not available to Jews. If you want to know Israelites' solution to this presence, Tryggve Mettinger's book, *No Graven Image* is where you go for this. He lays out a whole series of possibilities, all of which have evidence, archeological and textual, in the ancient world.

The options that the biblical authors seemed to turn to were things that manifested the living presence of God, or things that maybe fractionally bore God's being to earth; so the things that manifested the living presence of God. The most common, and this is from the priestly texts, are God's glory. When we say "God's Glory," it's not entirely clear what that word means. But I think you get a good impression of it from the last verses of the Book of Exodus. The cloud covered the tented meeting and glory of the Lord, whatever the glory is, filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able enter the tented meeting because the cloud had settled up on it. The Glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey, but if the cloud was not taken up, they did not set out. Until the day that it was taken up. The cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and the fire was in the cloud by night before the eyes of all the House of Israel at each stage of their journey.

This is the answer to the question, *how does the God who resides in heaven make the divine Presence felt on earth, through the glory?* Whatever this is, this tissue of pheno4(k)4.3(e gt3(o)11.3( 1Tc -t.( p)2.4(h)1211.4(e

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ownership language. This is an understanding in Isaiah, but the name of God bears the divine presence. When the name shows up, the presence is there. Now this is clearly Isaiah working with something like a storm God image, and not one that Jesus would use. But the underlying theology is perhaps more what we're interested in: the name makes the divine present.

So one of the problems, one of our realities, is that by Jesus's time, the divine name was not often used. So it was a blasphemy, it was a capital offense to use the divine name. So what was Jesus doing with all this name theology? I think really what he's saying is that speaking of God with reverence makes God a presence. I turn to this, to Matthew's memory, in 18:20, "Where two or more are gathered in my name," Jesus's name, "I am there with them." I think Matthew's understanding of this about Jesus is probably coming from a wider understanding of how the divine name works. When actions are taken in God's name, even if you don't mention the divine name, that makes God present. When prayers are offered to the divine name, that makes God present. This answers the question of how a God who resides in heaven can also be simultaneously present on earth.