

# The Lord's Prayer

## *In Heaven*

Part 3 - October 12, 2008

[Video Clip: Lord's Prayer from "The Visual Bible: Matthew"]

We are continuing our series on the Lord's Prayer this morning. Last week we saw how important it is to God that we think of Him first and foremost as "Our Father" (our Abba, Daddy, or Papa).

But, Jesus adds onto that greeting: "Who art in heaven". Many newer translations simply say, "in heaven".

So, why is it important to God that we declare His address?

Our Father - who resides at 777 Pearly Gates, City of God, Paradise - hallowed be Thy name ...

And did you know that God lives in the *third* Heaven?

Paul mentions it when he describes the encounter he had with God on the road to Damascus, where he was "caught up" into heaven.

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the **third heaven**. - 2 Corinthians 12:2a NIV

This verse is the basis for the Mormon doctrine of three levels of Heavenly kingdoms: Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial.

I'm bringing it up because this little verse confuses many believers, and because the explanation is surprisingly simple. In Paul's day, people commonly referred to three heavens; and likewise the Bible frequently speaks of all three.



The first heaven is the "Atmospheric Heaven" (*the sky*); for instance, when Noah's flood came ...

... the floodgates of the **heavens** were opened. - Genesis 7:11 NIV



The second heaven is the "Astronomic Heaven" (*outer space*); when God promised to bless Abraham with countless offspring ...

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the **heavens** and count the stars ... - Genesis 15:5 NIV



The third heaven is the “Abode of God”. Before John wrote Revelation, he was taken-up to the throne room of God.

... I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in **heaven** with someone sitting on it. - *Revelation 4:2 NIV*

So, when Paul mentions the third heaven, he’s not suggesting there are three levels within God’s abode; he’s simply referring to what everyone thinks of as “Heaven-Heaven” (where God lives).

But, Heaven isn’t a “level” or even a “place” where God “lives”.



- Heaven is the fullness of His presence.

It’s not His “retreat in the sky”. But, wherever God is, *is* Heaven. It’s an invisible realm, a dimension along side but apart from our own.

He dwells *outside* of the restrictions of three-D space and one-D time *so that* He can be close to all of His creation at once. [We covered this in “Limited Perspective” in our science series]

Q: So why did Jesus include God’s address in His prayer?!

A: He didn’t. He’s not referring to location, but to authority.



The same God who wants us to call Him Abba or Papa or Daddy is an awesome, overwhelming, fearsome God who rules and reigns from a heavenly throne.

- Our connection is both close *and* cosmic.

Even though we call Him “Father” we must never forget how awesome and fearsome He is. He’s “out of this world” in majesty!

- A. He’s omnipotent           (He has *total* power)
- B. He’s omniscient           (He has *total* perception)
- C. He’s omnipresent       (He has *total* presence)

Jesus opens this prayer by reminding us to *fear* the one we love. And this seems so contrary to what we studied last week. But it’s absolutely necessary for a *right* relationship with God.

The word “majesty” is Latin for “greatness”.

We use it to signify supremacy as in, “Her *Majesty* the Queen.” Applied to God, it’s a declaration of greatness *and* an invitation to worship.

As King David wrote in the Psalms:

O Lord, our Lord, how **majestic** is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise ... - *Psalm 8:1-2 NIV*

Notice how David says God has: "set [His] glory above the heavens"

The thought here isn't that God is far *from* us in distance, but that He's far *above* us in greatness!



- Our Father is personal but [also] majestic.

By teaching us to call Him "Father", Jesus isn't attempting to diminish God's majesty; He's simply making His majesty more approachable.

He is "*our* Father" ... "IN heaven"!

Whenever I pray publically, I try to convey this balance of warmth and majesty by addressing Him as "Father God".

On the one hand is Fatherly love that demands relationship; and on the other, transcendent greatness that demands reverence.

C.S. Lewis portrays Christ as the fierce but loving lion, Aslan.

[As the lion passed by] they were terribly afraid it would turn and look at them, yet in some [strange] way they wished it would. - *The Magician's Nephew* by C.S. Lewis

When Moses first saw the burning bush, he thought, "Hmm ..."

I will go over and see this strange sight ... - *Exodus 3:3 NIV*

Then God spoke!

At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. - *Exodus 3:6b NIV*

Now, John and Jesus were best friends. At Jesus' request, His mother moved in with John after the crucifixion. (*John 19:26-27*) But John got to see Jesus "*in Heaven*"; and wrote about it:

His head and hair were white like wool ... his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace ... His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, **I fell at his feet as though dead.** - *Revelation 1:14-17a NIV condensed*

One day each of us will have a similar experience.

- A. For those who called *Him* "Lord" in this life, it'll be a moment mixed with fear and *joy*.
- B. But for those who called *themselves* "Lord" in this life, it'll be a moment only of terror.

It used to be a compliment to be called a "God *fearing* man". But we just don't use that kind of language anymore ... too bad.



We tend to *over-focus* on God's "softer side". And when we do, we begin to see Him as a harmless old softy on sin (and our prayer lives suffer).

- Don't confuse "Father" God with "Uncle" God.

Look at what the psalmist says about the cause of sinfulness:

An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. - *Psalm 36:1 NIV*

Without a healthy fear of His Majesty, we'll transgress His laws without hesitation, (in the same way that a child, with no fear of a stove, won't hesitate to touch its bright orange coil).



- Healthy fear serves as a crucial alarm.

It warns and prepares us for impending danger, and drives us to our knees before God. The most costly sins occur when we suspend our reverence.

That is why the proverb says:

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. - *Proverbs 14:27 NIV*

I've never really had a problem with the seemingly contradictory concept of fearing a loving Father. My dad used to cover himself with a blanket when we played monster. It was so much fun jumping from couch to chair, just terrified of his strength and power yet secure in his love and protection.

- I didn't fear *harm*, I was joyfully overwhelmed by *power*!

So thanks to that blanket and my dad, I have it pretty easy, trusting, loving, and yet fearing "our Father" ... "in Heaven".