

IN THE HEAVENS
Thursday, February 12
Reading: Isaiah 55

Isaiah 55:9 *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts".*

What do you picture when you think of heaven? Is it a place of golden streets and sitting around on a cloud playing a harp? Is it a majestic city with a shining throne? The Bible does not give us enough information to get a detailed idea of what heaven is like? Yet Jesus tells us to pray "Our Father in heaven."

In one sense, this is a reminder of the transcendence of God. He is far above us and beyond our comprehension. Our Father is "enthroned in heaven: above the chaos, beyond the noise. He sees what we can't. He rules with wisdom and perspective we don't have. And He holds together what feels like it's falling apart."¹

The prophet Isaiah wrote:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9)

To many, this description leads them to believe that God is distant. That He exists somewhere out there and cares little for what is going on in our lives. But this is far from the truth describing God is "in heaven." The Jewish people thought of heaven in three steps. (In fact, the Greek word translated "heaven" in Matthew 6 is plural.) The First Heaven was the domain of the clouds and the birds. We would call this sky or atmosphere. The Second Heaven was where the sun, moon, and stars existed. We call this outer space. Finally, the Third Heaven, sometimes called the heaven of heavens or the highest heaven, was where the very presence of God dwelt.

Think about it! When Jesus told us to pray "Our Father heavens(s)" He was not limiting the presence of God to some distant corner of existence but reminding us that God is everywhere – He is in the heavens! The words of Solomon when he dedicated the great temple in Jerusalem say it well.

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven,
cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27)

So what does this mean for us? Just before describing God's thoughts and ways being higher than the heavens from the earth, Isaiah calls us to:

Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for He will freely pardon. (Isaiah 55:6-7)

When we pray "our Father in heaven" we are acknowledging that our God reigns and is all-powerful and ever-present to hear our cries and answer according to His will and purpose. We can have confidence because our Father is in the heavens!

¹ Brad Gray & Brad Nelson. Bringing Heaven Here, p. 44