

Boston College  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY CONTINUING EDUCATION  
**Encore Access**





# Boston College

law to govern their community. Jesus didn't leave us much. We have a lot of writings about Jesus from the early Church. But from him, himself, we don't have much. The two things I've come, in my own desire to meet Jesus the theologian, the two places I keep coming back to are the Lord's Prayer, which I think, among the texts of the New Testament, we can have some confidence that this was a prayer that Jesus said, maybe not the same way every time. Maybe that's why we have variations, which I'll discuss in a minute, but that these are probably Jesus's real words.

And then the other thing we have is the Hebrew Bible. So when I say Old Testament, I'm talking about the book that Catholics use, which is expanded. It's not just the Hebrew





# Boston College

we're looking specifically at the Our Father, it's the image of mercy, it's the image of fatherhood. It's the image of tender love that Jesus seems to be inspired by and is drawing from the Hebrew Bible.

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 J i2 Tc 0 Tw 12.96 0 Td ( )Tj EM3 /P <</MCID10(m)JTJ 0.004-3.6(2 011 Tw -12.9Wth)12.( i)-2(n10.3( h)12.(s-2.3(r)4.3

# Boston College

leaving the Temple because the sins of Israel have made it impossible for God to remain. The divine Presence is also leaving the Temple because Nebuchadnezzar is on his way down to destroy the Temple, and the divine Presence has to get out. So it's a catastrophe that the Presence is leaving the temple, but you look at Ezekiel 11:23, the divine Presence takes up a position on a hill on the east side of

<https://www.bostoncollege.edu/encore>

# Boston College

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 functionally 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 manifest himself to the people of Israel?



# Boston College

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.

I think Jesus's mind needed to answer these questions, I think. Or at least maybe he didn't answer

# Boston College

drawing on images like this, and images in the final chapters of Isaiah to describe the kingdom of peace that comes as a result of Jesus's ministry.

Jesus is longing for his Father's return – well, longing for the divine return. How Jesus understood his own relationship to the Father is something I'll leave to the systematic theologians, the patristic authors. He's longing for the divine return, but he sees himself as this David character, who is going to pasture them, who is going to be the Good Shepherd, to retrieve the lost sheep.

a e 1 0

16024(h)12r(e)4(b)27(18124)2(04-h)12l c ( )TJT

# Boston College

something like the land, which by his time the Israelites would have known that they could lose because they had lost it by that point, and then regained it, but were about to lose it again.

There's something in Jesus's mind here. I think he wants to go back to that desert experience of simply the dependency on pure grace as a way of understanding the material goods that he receives in his ministry. I think that's there. It's, again, just a hunch, but I think it's there. So that's where my mind is with that particular verse.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us." I think this is a lot about . . . I like that Matthew talks about debt here. We say trespasses, but the original word could also mean debt. Luke, by the way, changes the word trespasses, or debt, to sins. "Forgive us our sins as we, ourselves, forgive everyone indebted to us." That's how Luke rereads it.

I don't think it's about sins or crimes in Jesus's mouth. This is an injection of my own piety here, but I don't believe Jesus sinned. I think that's a necessary theological trope. So what exactly is he talking about? I think that the fear of debt is deeply ingrained into the mind of Israel. For this, I turn to Rainer Albertz's books, the History of the Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period. He goes into great detail about what debt slavery did to the Israelite economy, what it did to Israelite society, and how it weakened Israel repeatedly, and allowed foreign invasion.

Amos 8:4 is probably a good description of this: "Hear this, you who trample the needy, and bring ruin to the poor of the land, saying 'When will the new moon be festival be over so that we may sell grain, or the Sabbath, that we may offer our wheat for sale



# Boston College

Old Testament that I've studied t

# Boston College

Ms. Donovan: Thank you, very much, Father Simone. You certainly gave us an illuminated way to look at the Our Father, thank you.

Father Simone's willing to take questions

# Boston College

through in the 500s and waste everything, and then the Israelites come back about 500 and reestablish Jerusalem and a Temple, and this is the era that Jesus is living, 500 years later.

# Boston College

Fr. Simone: I wouldn't say that it speaks to contemplative prayer, to answer the second question first. I think it's intercessory, in this case. Is there a contemplative prayer tradition that Jesus might have engaged in? Yes. But I think this prayer that we've inherited from him is primarily intercessory. I think he's praying for his own needs and for the needs of the people he loves.

To get back to your other question, "Why kingdom come," the fact that it's something that Jesus imagines has to arrive indicates that at least in the context of this prayer, it's something that hasn't yet taken root. Now, is it something that is intuitively right, and if we just find the right words for it, the Gospel, we'll start to be able to unveil it and establish it on earth? That might be the case, in which case the Kingdom of God is among us and within us, well, among us and within us. But there is definitely a sense, at least in the language of the prayer, that it's something that's not here yet, and needs to arrive. At least that's my take on it. Does that get to what you're asking?

Participant:



# Boston College

Participant: I notice that the book, *Jesus of Nazareth* is for sale here. How does that book fit into the spectrum of your project?

Fr. Simone: Thank you for that. I love that book. Dan Harrington actually said that this was the best book about Jesus ever written, and he had written a few himself. I think that's fairly significant. I love, love, love, books about Jesus that talk about Jesus the rabbi or Jesus the Jew. I think at our own peril we separate Jesus from that culture and that tradition. Lohfink's book firmly places Jesus in his own first-century culture, which, with all of its complexity, in fact Lohfink doesn't say this, but I've heard other scholars. . . I think it was E. P. Sanders who said that Judaism of the first century would be today as if all Christian denominations still tried to worship at St. Peter's in Rome. There were those kinds of divisions and disagreements, and yet this common worship space that almost all of them found to be sacred. Anyway, that's a very meandering answer to your question.

I requested that book because I think it also gets at many of the same questions that I've raised in my own work here. How does Jesus appropriate his own religious tradition? Where does he appropriate maybe uncritically and where is he appropriating it with great distinction from the other religious minds of his day? I think Lohfink answers many of those same questions.

Participant: [inaudible]

Fr. Simone:

# Boston College

Anyone else? Right here, yes.

Participant: Speaking about books, where would you put *The Jewish Mary*? Have you read that particular . . .

Fr. Simone: I have not read that book.

Participant: It's by Mary Christine Athans.

Fr. Simone: I can't give you an answer because I haven't read.

Participant: Yeah. I just read it recently.