

*Teachings Regarding*  
*The Three Degrees of Glory in General*

**General Teachings Concerning The Three  
Kingdoms of Glory**

**James E. Talmage**

*Graded Glories* -- That the privileges and glories of heaven are graded to suit the various capacities of the blessed, is indicated in Christ's teachings. To the apostles He said: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." [John 14:2-3]

This utterance is supplemented by that of Paul, who speaks of graded conditions in the resurrection as follows: "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." [1 Cor. 15:40-42]

A fuller knowledge of this subject has been imparted in the present dispensation. From a revelation given in 1832 [D&C 76] we learn that three great kingdoms or degrees of glory are established, known as the Celestial, the Terrestrial, and the Telestial. Far below the last and least of these, is the state of eternal punishment prepared for the sons of Perdition.

*The Celestial Glory is provided for those who merit the highest honors of heaven. In the revelation referred to, we read of them:* "They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given -- That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father

sheds forth upon all those who are just and true. They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things -- They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God -- Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. \* \* \* These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people. These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection. These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just. \* \* \* These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood. These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical." [D&C 76:50-70]

*The Terrestrial Glory -- This, the next lowest degree, will be attained by many whose works do not merit the highest reward.* We read of them: "These are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament. Behold, these are they who died without law; And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it. These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. These are they who receive of his glory, but not of

his fulness. These are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father. Wherefore they are bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun. These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God.” [D&C 76:71-79]

*The Telestial Glory* -- The revelation continues: “And again, we saw the glory of the telestial, which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon in the firmament. These are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. These are they who deny not the Holy Spirit. These are they who are thrust down to hell. These are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work.” [D&C 76:81-85] *We learn further that the inhabitants of this kingdom are to be graded among themselves, comprising as they do the unenlightened among the varied opposing sects and divisions of men, and sinners of many types, whose offenses are not those of utter perdition:* “For as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another -- some of Christ, and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.” [D&C 76:98-101] *Evidently a considerable part of the human family will fail of all glory beyond that of the telestial kingdom, for we are told:* “But behold, and lo, we saw the glory and the inhabitants of the telestial world, that they were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore.” [D&C 76:109] *They are thus not wholly rejected; their every merit will be respected.* “For they shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared; And they shall be servants of the Most High, but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds

without end.” [D&C 76:111-112]

*That every soul shall find his place in the hereafter, that he shall be judged and assigned according to what he is, is no less truly scriptural than reasonable. He shall inherit according to his capacity to receive, enjoy, and utilize. This is made sublimely plain by revelation given in 1832, in which we read:* “For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.” [D&C 88:22-24] (*Articles of Faith*, pp.405; italics added not for emphasis but clarity in reading)

### **We Do Not Have All Information About the Three Degrees of Glory**

#### **Joseph Smith**

Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder -- the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter. I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 304)

### **In My Father’s House are Many Mansions**

#### **Brigham Young**

- These words set forth the fact to which Jesus referred when he said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” How many I am not prepared to say; but here are three distinctly spoken of: the celestial, the highest; the terrestrial, the next below it; and the telestial, the third. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.391)
- We read in the Bible that there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. In the book of Doctrine and Covenants, these glories are called telestial,

terrestrial and celestial, which is the highest. These are worlds, different departments, or mansions, in our Father's house. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.382)

- How many kingdoms there are has not been told to us; they are innumerable. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.382)
- How many glories and kingdoms will there be in eternity? You will see the same variety in eternity as you see in the world. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.382)

### **Many Gradations Within Each Kingdom of Glory**

#### **D&C 76:98**

And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one, for as one star differs from another star in glory even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world.

#### **D&C 131:1**

In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees.

#### **James E. Talmage**

- The three kingdoms of widely differing glories are severally organized on a plan of gradation. The Telestial kingdom comprises subdivisions; this also is the case, we are told, with the Celestial; and, by analogy, we conclude that a similar condition prevails in the Terrestrial. Thus the innumerable degrees of merit amongst mankind are provided for in an infinity of graded glories. The Celestial kingdom is supremely honored by the personal ministrations of the Father and the Son. The Terrestrial kingdom will be administered through the higher, without a fulness of glory. The Telestial is governed through the ministrations of the Terrestrial, by "angels who are appointed to minister for them." (*Articles of Faith*, p. 409)
- There is no claim of universal forgiveness; no unwarranted glorification of Mercy to the degrading or neglect of Justice; no thought that a single sin of omission or of commission shall fail to leave its wound or scar. In the great future

there shall be found a place for every soul, whatever his grade of spiritual intelligence may be. "In my Father's house are many mansions," (John 14:2), declared the Savior to his apostles; and Paul adds, "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead," (I Corinthians 15:40-42). The Latter-day Saints claim a revelation of the present dispensation as supplementing the scripture just quoted. From this later scripture, (see D&C, Sec. 76), we learn that there are three well-defined degrees in the future state, with numerous, perhaps numberless, gradations. . . . We hold that there is a wide difference between salvation and exaltation; that there are infinite gradations beyond the grave as there are here, and as there were in the state preceding this. (*The Story and Philosophy of "Mormonism,"* p.131)

#### **John A. Widtsoe**

These gradations in salvation may be innumerable, since all members of the human family are different. The many gradations are however reduced to three classes: (1) the celestial, the highest, as of the sun in glory; (2) the terrestrial, the next, as of the moon; (3) the telestial, the lowest, as of the stars. (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, p.199)

#### **Bruce R. McConkie**

Rewards granted individuals in eternity will vary between and within kingdoms. Only those who are sealed in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage and who thereafter keep the terms and conditions of that covenant will attain the highest of three heavens within the celestial kingdom. (D. & C. 131:1-4.) Inhabitants of the telestial kingdom will differ in glory among themselves "as one star differs from another star in glory." (D. & C. 76:98; 1 Cor. 15:41.) Similar variations will exist among inheritors of the terrestrial kingdom. (D. & C. 76:71-79.) [*Mormon Doctrine*, p.420]

## **End Results of Atonement Include the Three Kingdoms of Glory**

### **Neal A. Maxwell**

Though differing dramatically in degree, the end results of the atonement of Jesus Christ include everlasting life in the telestial kingdom, which is still a kingdom of glory. Better still will be the terrestrial kingdom; and, of course, the most prized of all, the celestial kingdom. (*But for a Small Moment*, p.116)

## **The Law We Live Determines the Kingdom of Glory**

### **D&C 88**

22 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

23 And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

24 And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.

### **Brigham Young**

This is the plan of salvation. Jesus will never cease his work until all are brought up to the enjoyment of a kingdom in the mansions of his Father, where there are many kingdoms and many glories, to suit the works and faithfulness of all men that have lived on the earth. Some will obey the celestial law and receive of its glory, some will abide the terrestrial and some the telestial, and others will receive no glory. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.56)

### **John Taylor**

- God is interested in the whole of the human family. He cannot take them all into the celestial kingdom, for they are not all prepared to go there, and you cannot prepare them and He cannot, because they have to be governed by certain laws and certain principles and certain feelings, and if they are not governed by these and will not be governed by a celestial law, they

are not prepared for a celestial glory. There are some that may be governed by a terrestrial law, and may be prepared for a terrestrial glory, but not for a celestial glory. Still, they are God's children, and He is doing the best by them He can. (*Journal of Discourses*, 24:194-195)

- We are told that if we cannot abide the law of the celestial kingdom we cannot inherit a celestial glory. Is not that doctrine? Yes. "But," says one, "are not we all going into the celestial kingdom?" I think not, unless we turn round and mend our ways very materially. It is only those who can abide a celestial glory and obey a celestial law that will be prepared to enter a celestial kingdom. "Well," says another, "are the others going to be burned up?" No. "Do you expect everybody to walk according to this higher law?" No, I do not. And do I expect those that do not are going into the celestial kingdom? No, I do not. "Well, where will they go?" If they are tolerably good men and do not do anything very bad, they will get into a terrestrial kingdom, and if there are some that cannot abide a terrestrial law, they may get into a telestial kingdom, or otherwise, as the case may be. (*The Gospel Kingdom*, p.20)
- As eternal beings we all have to stand before him to be judged; and he has provided different degrees of glory -- the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial glories -- which are provide according to certain unchangeable laws which cannot be controverted. What will he do with them? For those who are ready to listen to him and be brought under the influence of the Spirit of God, and be lead by the principles of revelation and the light of heaven, and who are willing to yield obedience to his commands at all times and carry out his purposed upon the earth and who are willing to abide a celestial law, he has prepared for them a celestial glory, that they may be with him for ever and ever. And what about the others? They are not prepared to go there any more that lead is prepared to stand the same test as gold or silver; and there they cannot go. And there is a great gulf between them. But he [God] will do with them just as well as he can. A great many of these people in the world, thousand and hundreds of millions of them, will

be a great deal better off through the interposition of the Almighty than they have any id (*Journal of Discourses*, 20:116)

### **Salvation Means Receiving a Kingdom of Glory**

#### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

- Salvation is the gift of God, according to the scriptures, to all men who do not sin against the light and become sons of perdition. Salvation is of varying stages or degrees. Every man is to be judged according to his works, and for this reason various degrees or kingdoms have been established. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:13)
- It is a very pleasing and consoling thing to know that *the Lord will save all of his children, excepting the very few who wilfully rebel against him*. When his children have paid the penalty of their transgressions, they shall come forth from the clutches of the second death to receive a place somewhere in the great heavenly kingdoms, which are prepared for them with their several glories and degrees of salvation.

*It is the purpose of the Almighty to save all mankind, and all will enter into his kingdoms in some degree of glory, except sons of perdition who sin beyond the power of repentance and redemption, and therefore cannot receive forgiveness of sins. All the rest shall be saved, but not all with the same degree of glory or exaltation. Every man will be judged according to his works, his opportunities for receiving the truth, and the intent of his heart. (Doctrines of Salvation, 2:21; emphasis added)*

#### **Brigham Young**

- This is the plan of salvation. Jesus will never cease his work until all are brought up to the enjoyment of a kingdom in the mansions of his Father, where there are many kingdoms and many glories, to suit the works and faithfulness of all men that have lived on the earth. Some will obey the celestial law and receive of its glory, some will abide the terrestrial and some the telestial, and others will receive no glory. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.56)

- We are placed on this earth to prove whether we are worthy to go into the celestial world, the terrestrial, or the telestial or to hell, or to any other kingdom, or place, and we have enough of life given to us to do this. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.87)
- These words set forth the fact to which Jesus referred when he said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” How many I am not prepared to say; but here are three distinctly spoken of: the celestial, the highest; the terrestrial, the next below it; and the telestial, the third. If we were to take the pains to read what the Lord has said to his people in the latter days we should find that he has made provision for all the inhabitants of the earth; every creature who desires, and who strives in the least, to overcome evil and subdue iniquity within himself or herself, and to live worthy of a glory, will possess one. We who have received the fulness of the Gospel of the Son of God, or the Kingdom of heaven that has come to earth, are in possession of those laws, ordinances, commandments and revelations that will prepare us, by strict obedience, to inherit the celestial kingdom, to go into the presence of the Father and the Son. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.391)
- We read in the Bible that there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. In the book of Doctrine and Covenants, these glories are called telestial, terrestrial and celestial, which is the highest. These are worlds, different departments, or mansions, in our Father’s house. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, pp.382-383)

#### **John Taylor**

We are told that if we cannot abide the law of the celestial kingdom we cannot inherit a celestial glory. Is not that doctrine? Yes. “But,” says one, “are not we all going into the celestial kingdom?” I think not, unless we turn round and mend our ways very materially. It is only those who can abide a celestial glory and obey a celestial law that will be prepared to enter a celestial kingdom. “Well,” says another, “are the others going to be burned up?” No. “Do you expect everybody to walk according to this higher law?” No, I do not. And do I expect those that do not

are going into the celestial kingdom? No, I do not. "Well, where will they go?" If they are tolerably good men and do not do anything very bad, they will get into a terrestrial kingdom, and if there are some that cannot abide a terrestrial law, they may get into a telestial kingdom, or otherwise, as the case may be. (*The Gospel Kingdom*, p.20)

### **Progression Within and Between Kingdoms?**

[This is a controversial subject. But here are some of what the Brethren have taught.]

#### **Joseph Smith**

But except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. This eternal truth settles the question of all men's religion. A man may be saved, after the judgment, in the terrestrial kingdom, or in the telestial kingdom, but he can never see the celestial kingdom of God, without being born of water and the Spirit. He may receive a glory like unto the moon, (i.e., of which the light of the moon is typical), or a star, (i.e., of which the light of the stars is typical), but he can never come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, unless he becomes as a little child, and is taught by the Spirit of God. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p.12)

#### **George Albert Smith**

There are some people who have supposed that if we are quickened telestial bodies that eventually, throughout the ages of eternity, we will continue to progress until we will find our place in the celestial kingdom, but the scriptures and revelations of God have said that those who are quickened telestial bodies cannot come where God and Christ dwell, worlds without end. (Conference Report, October 1945, p.172)

#### **Spence W. Kimball**

After a person has been assigned to his place in the kingdom, either in the telestial, the terrestrial, or the celestial, or to his exaltation, he will never advance from his assigned glory to another glory. That is eternal! That is why we must make our decisions early in life and why it is imperative that such decisions be right. (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p.50; *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p.243-244)

#### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

It has been asked if it is possible for one who inherits the telestial glory to advance in time to the celestial glory?

The answer to this question is, No!

The scriptures are clear on this point. Speaking of those who go to the telestial kingdom, the revelation says: "And they shall be servants of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end."

Notwithstanding this statement, those who do not comprehend the word of the Lord argue that while this is true, that they cannot go where God is "worlds without end," yet in time they will get where God was, but he will have gone on to other heights.

This is false reasoning, illogical, and creates mischief in making people think they may procrastinate their repentance, but in course of time they will reach exaltation in celestial glory.

Now let us see how faulty this reasoning is. If in time those who enter the telestial glory may progress till they reach the stage in which the celestial is in now -- then they are in celestial glory, are they not, even if the celestial has advanced? That being the case (I state this for the argument only, for it is not true), then they partake of all the blessings which are now celestial. That means that they become gods, have exaltation, gain the fulness of the Father, and receive a continuation of the "seeds forever." The Lord, however, has said that these blessings, which are celestial blessings, they may never have; they are barred forever!

The celestial and terrestrial and telestial glories, I have heard compared to the wheels on a train. The second and third may, and will, reach the place where the first was, but the first will have moved on and will still be just the same distance in advance of

them. This illustration is not true! The wheels do not run on the same track, and do not go in the same direction. The terrestrial and the telestial are limited in their powers of advancement, worlds without end. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:31-32)

### **James E. Talmage**

It is reasonable to believe, in the absence of direct revelation by which alone absolute knowledge of the matter could be acquired, that, in accordance with God's plan of eternal progression, advancement within each of the three specified kingdoms will be provided for; though as to possible progress from one kingdom to another the scriptures make no positive affirmation. Eternal advancement along different lines is conceivable. We may conclude that degrees and grades will ever characterize the kingdoms of our God. Eternity is progressive; perfection is relative; the essential feature of God's living purpose is its associated power of eternal increase. (*Articles of Faith*, p.409)

### **Bruce R. McConkie**

Heresy five: There are those who say that there is progression from one kingdom to another in the eternal worlds or that lower kingdoms eventually progress to where higher kingdoms once were.

This belief lulls men into a state of carnal security. It causes them to say, "God is so merciful; surely he will save us all eventually; if we do not gain the celestial kingdom now, eventually we will; so why worry?"

It lets people live a life of sin here and now with the hope that they will be saved eventually.

The true doctrine is that all men will be resurrected, but they will come forth in the resurrection with different kinds of bodies - some celestial, others terrestrial, others telestial, and some with bodies incapable of standing any degree of glory. The body we receive in the resurrection determines the glory we receive in the kingdoms that are prepared.

Of those in the telestial world it is written:

"And they shall be servants of the Most High, but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end" (D&C 76:112).

Of those who had the opportunity to enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in this

life and who did not do it the revelation says:.

Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven; which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. [D&C 132:16-17]

They neither progress from one kingdom to another, nor does a lower kingdom ever get where a higher kingdom once was. Whatever eternal progression there is, it is within a sphere. ("The Seven Deadly Heresies," *Classic Speeches*, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1994, pp. 175-176)

## **Visiting Between Kingdoms**

### **D&C 76**

86 These are they who receive not of his fulness in the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial;

87 And the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial.

88 And also the telestial receive it of the administering of angels who are appointed to minister for them, or who are appointed to be ministering spirits for them; for they shall be heirs of salvation.

### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

Yet, through his abundant mercy, the Lord will do for all the best that can be done, and therefore he will give to all a place somewhere—if not within the gates of the Holy City, then it must be on the outside—where those who are not entitled to the fulness of blessings may be ministered to by those who have greater glory. For we read also here in this vision, where the glories are spoken of, that those who dwell in the celestial kingdom shall minister unto those of the terrestrial kingdom; those in the terrestrial kingdom shall minister to those of the telestial kingdom.

The Son may go to the terrestrial, but they who

enter into that kingdom shall not receive the fulness of the Father; they will not see the greatness of his glory. He withholds that from them. They never come back again into the fulness of his presence. Those who enter into the telestial kingdom will not receive the fulness of the Father or of the Son. They will not visit there but will send messengers to visit the inhabitants of that glory and instruct them.

Those in the terrestrial kingdom shall visit those in the telestial kingdom, and those of the celestial shall visit those in the terrestrial kingdom. Where the Father is these cannot come, for the Lord has said: "Where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end." Yet in this very same section it is written that notwithstanding this fact, so great shall be the blessings that come to those who enter there that it is beyond our comprehension. Such is the great mercy of the Lord. He will endeavor to save all his children and exalt as many as he possibly can. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:5-6)

### **Delbert L. Stapley**

Those in this kingdom received not the gospel of Christ nor his testimony, yet did not deny the Holy Spirit. They are thrust down to hell. They will not be redeemed from Satan until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ, the Lamb, shall have finished his work. Those of the telestial glory will not receive the Lord's fullness of the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial, and the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial. (See D&C 76:81-87.) [Conference Report, October 1967, p.73]