

# D&C LESSON 20: The Kingdoms of Glory—D&C 76, 131, 137

**INTRODUCTION:** The revelation in D&C 76, often called The Vision, seems to be a series of six visions. They are:

- The vision of the Father and the Son (76:20-24)
- The vision of Perdition or Satan (76:25-29)
- The vision of the sufferings of the Sons of Perdition (76:30-38, 43-49)
- The vision of the Celestial Kingdom (76:50-70, 92-96)
- The vision of the Terrestrial Kingdom (76:71-80, 91, 97)
- The vision of the Telestial Kingdom (76:81-90, 98-112)

The vision came as a prophet and his scribe were *marveling* and *meditating* upon a gospel truth, which in this case they had just learned through the spirit of revelation. **This seems to be a pattern.** It is interesting to note how many of the great recorded visions through the ages came while prophets were engaged in "pondering," "reflecting," or "meditating" upon some principle brought to their attention by the **scriptures** and the **Spirit**.

No doubt all of us could have revealed to us deeper understanding by devoting ourselves more to "pondering" and "reflecting" upon eternal truths. Perhaps that is why we are continually reminded to "search" (D&C 1:37), "treasure" (JS-M 37), "ponder" (Moro. 10:3), and "feast" (2 Ne. 31:20) upon the words of the Lord.

## 1. THE KINGDOMS OF GLORY AND "THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS"

- The entire vision testifies of Jesus Christ and His infinite Atonement.
- Joseph Smith's description of the vision begins and ends with a testimony of the Savior.
- Each will inherit a kingdom of glory based on the manner in which we have "received the testimony of Jesus" (D&C 76:51)

## 2. PERDITION

- The word *perdition* refers to a state of loss and destruction rather than a kingdom of glory.
- **Pride rules.**

**Heber C. Kimball:** "The nearer a person approaches the Lord, a greater power will be manifest by the adversary to prevent the accomplishment of His purposes."

**The Prophet Joseph Smith:** "What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 358).

**Spencer W. Kimball:** "The sin against the Holy Ghost requires such knowledge that it is manifestly impossible for the rank and file to commit such a sin" (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 23).

## 3. THE TELESTIAL KINGDOM

- The telestial kingdom is the lowest kingdom of glory.
  - The Lord compared its glory to the glory of the **STARS**
- D&C 76:101** (suggests four things that those who inherit a telestial glory **will not receive**) "But [they] received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant."
- The telestial is reserved for those who decline to receive the testimony of Jesus, in mortality or the spirit world.
  - They decline the covenants.
  - They **choose** not to receive these things, and they do so in perfect understanding of their choices
  - The telestial glory is also a **choice of the heart**.
  - The heart of a telestial being is a kind of **cold selfishness**, a desire to **use others for his own gain**.
  - They are **abusive** of their fellow human beings.
  - They violate the "royal law."
  - They **reject the Savior** deliberately, making no pretense of receiving Him.

**D&C 76** explains what the telestial kingdom will bring:

- They must **wait in hell** (the spirit world) for the last resurrection (76:84,85)
- They will not receive of the fulness of the Father or the Son in eternity (76:86)
- They will not be gathered with the saints (76:102)
- They **suffer the wrath of God** on earth (76:104)
- They **suffer the vengeance of eternal fire** (76:106)
- Even though they have rejected Christ, they will bow the knee and confess (76:110)
- They **shall be servants** of the Most High; but they can never go where God and Christ are (76:112)

#### 4. THE TERRESTRIAL KINGDOM

- The Lord compared the glory of the terrestrial kingdom to the glory of the **MOON**

##### Characteristics of terrestrial beings:

- They are "honorable," but they are **passive and weak in their testimonies**.
- They **choose not to magnify their callings** or contribute to the Lord's work.
- They may be **morally lax**.
- They may choose to **put their own counsel ahead of the Lord's**.
- They may **forget the Sabbath**.
- They are **selective about which commandments they will follow**.
- They **choose not to abide by the "royal law" to love their neighbors**.
- They might act honorably toward them, but there is **no willingness to enter into covenants of love**.

**Elder Bruce R. McConkie:** To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to **take the Lord's side** on every issue. It is to vote as he would vote. It is to think what he thinks, to believe what he believes, to say what he would say and do what he would do in the same situation. **It is to have the mind of Christ** and be one with him as he is one with his Father. **Our doctrine is clear; its application more difficult. Some personal introspection might be helpful:**

Am I valiant in the **testimony of Jesus** if my chief interest and concern in life is laying up in store the treasures of the earth, rather than the building up of the kingdom?

Am I valiant if I have **more of this world's goods** than my just needs and wants require, yet I do not draw from my surplus to support missionary work, build temples, and care for the needy?

Am I valiant if my approach to the Church and its doctrines is intellectual only, if I am more concerned with **having a religious dialogue** on this or that point than I am on gaining a personal spiritual experience?

Am I valiant if I **use a boat, live in a country home, or engage in some other recreational pursuit** on weekends that takes me away from **my spiritual responsibilities**?

Am I valiant if I engage in **gambling, play cards, go to pornographic movies, shop on Sunday, wear immodest clothes**, or do any of the things that are the accepted way of life among worldly people?

If we are to gain salvation, **we must put first in our lives the things of God's kingdom**. With us it must be the kingdom of God or nothing. We have come out of darkness; ours is the marvelous light of Christ. We must walk in the light.

To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to **bridle our passions, control our appetites, and rise above carnal and evil things**. It is to overcome the world as did Christ who is our prototype and who himself was the most valiant of all our Father's children. It is to be **morally clean, to pay our tithes and offerings, to honor the Sabbath day, to pray with full purpose of heart, to lay our all upon the altar if called upon to do so**.

(Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "Be Valiant in the Fight of Faith," Ensign, Nov. 1974, p. 35)

#### How can we keep ourselves from being "blinded by the craftiness of men"?

**Helaman 5:12** And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is **upon the rock of our Redeemer**, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must **build your foundation**; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.

**D&C 3:7** For, behold, you should not have **feared** man more than God. Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words—

**8** Yet you should have been **faithful**; and he would have **extended his arm and supported you** against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and **he would have been with you in every time of trouble**.

**D&C 52:14** And again, I will give unto you a **pattern** in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations—

**15** Wherefore he that **prayeth**, whose spirit is **contrite**, [feeling regret and sorrow for one's sins or offenses; penitent.] the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

**16** He that **speaketh**, whose spirit is contrite, whose **language is meek and edifieth**, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.

**17** And again, he that **trembleth under my power** shall be made **strong**, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you.

## 5. THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM

- The celestial kingdom is the highest kingdom of glory.
- The Lord compared its glory to the glory of the **SUN**

**Robert Millet:** In a celestial society there are no hidden agendas; all motives, thoughts, words, and actions are pure, so that there is nothing of which to be ashamed and therefore nothing to try to hide. It is an interesting experience to try to live that way for one day, or even one hour.

It is a place of "transcendent beauty" where we will meet our beloved families and all our righteous forbears once again, never to be parted.

"All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God . Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom" (D&C131:7).

In other words, **celestial glory is a choice of the heart.** We become heirs of that kingdom through the ordinances, it is true—but those ordinances can be done by proxy. It is **receiving** the ordinances that matters. **They are symbols of the desires of our hearts and the commitment to come unto Jesus.**

- **Pride is the chief obstacle** to the celestial kingdom.
- A prideful person simply **puts his own counsel ahead of the Lord's** and **will not follow Him.**
- Those who in their hearts **do not choose** the covenant of eternal love exclude themselves from the highest degree of the celestial.

These verses outline the blessings that will attend those who merit such an inheritance.

- 76:54-"They . . . are the church of the Firstborn"
- 76:55-" . . . the Father has given **all things**"
- 76:56-"They are **priests and kings**"
- 76:56-"They . . . have received of **his fulness**"
- 76:56-"They are **priests** of the Most High"
- 76:56-"They . . . have received of his . . . **glory**"
- 76:57-"And are priests of the most high"
- 76:58-"They are **gods**"
- 76:59-"**All things are theirs**"
- 76:60-"They shall **overcome all things**"
- 76:62-" .**dwell [with] God and Christ** forever."
- 76:63-"He shall **bring [them] with him** when he shall come"
- 76:64-" . have part in the **first resurrection**"
- 76:66-"They . . . are come to **Mount Zion**"
- 76:66-"They are come . . . unto the **city** of the Living God"
- 76:68-"[Their] names **written in heaven**"
- 76:69-"They . . . are just men made **perfect**"
- 76:70-"[Their] bodies are **celestial**"
- 76:70-"[Their] glory is that of the **sun**"
- 76:94-"They **see as they are seen**"
- 76:94-"they **know as they are known**"
- 76:94-"Having received of **his fulness** and of his grace"
- 76:95-"He makes them **equal in power**, and in **might**, and in **dominion.**"

### CONCLUSION:

#### What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

When the Savior revealed the royal law, He explained it with a parable in which He made very clear that there are three kinds of people in the world—**celestial, terrestrial, and telestial.**

Asked what one must do to inherit eternal life, the Savior responded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and will all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." He was then asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho , and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." These represent **the telestial class** of mankind—those who for their own gain injure and abuse others. Their hearts are proud and selfish.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite." These represent **the terrestrial class** of mankind—Church members who choose not to live the gospel with all their hearts. They do not go out of their way to injure others, but there is little love in a terrestrial heart.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."<sup>26</sup> The Samaritan represents **the celestial class** of mankind—those who love one another. Their hearts are filled with that charity which, Moroni tells us, is "the pure love of Christ."<sup>27</sup>

Everyone in the Church who is on the straight and narrow path, who is striving and struggling and desiring to do what is right, though is far from perfect in his life, if he passes out of this life while he's on the straight and narrow, he's going to go on to eternal reward in his Father's kingdom.

**You don't need to get a complex or get a feeling that you have to be perfect to be saved. You don't.** There's only been one perfect person, and that's the Lord Jesus, but **in order to be saved in the kingdom of God and in order to pass the test of mortality, what you have to do is get on the straight and narrow path—thus charting a course leading to eternal life—**and then, being on that path, pass out of this life in full fellowship. I'm not saying that you don't have to keep the commandments. I'm saying you don't have to be perfect to be saved. If you did, no one would be saved. The way it operates is this: **you get on the path that's named "the straight and narrow."** **You do it by entering the gate of repentance and baptism,** a very great distance, to a reward that's called eternal life. If you're on that path and pressing forward, and you die, you'll never get off the path. There is no such thing as falling off the straight and narrow path in the life to come, and the reason is that this life is the time that is given to men to prepare for eternity.

**Now is the time and the day of your salvation, so if you're working zealously in this life—though you haven't fully overcome the world and you haven't done all you hoped you might do—you're still going to be saved.** You don't have to do what Jacob said, "Go beyond the mark." **You don't have to live a life that's truer than true. You don't have to have an excessive zeal that becomes fanatical and becomes unbalancing. What you have to do is stay in the mainstream of the Church and live as upright and decent people live in the Church—keeping the commandments, paying your tithing, serving in the organizations of the Church, loving the Lord, staying on the straight and narrow path.** If you're on that path when death comes—because this is the time and the day appointed, this is the probationary estate—you'll never fall off from it, and, for all practical purposes, your calling and election is made sure.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie  
"The Probationary Test of Mortalty,"  
Address given at the University of Utah,  
January 10, 1982, p. 11