

# The Prophet Receives a Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory

Lesson  
**23**

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**Purpose** To give the children a better understanding of the three degrees of glory and to strengthen their desire to return to Heavenly Father with their families.

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- Preparation**
1. Prayerfully study the historical account given in this lesson; Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; 137; and the following verses from Doctrine and Covenants 76: verses 11–24 (circumstances of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon’s vision of the three degrees of glory); verses 50–60, 62, 70, 92–93 (requirements and rewards of the celestial kingdom); verses 71–80, 91 (requirements and rewards of the terrestrial kingdom); and verses 81–90, 100–103 (requirements and rewards of the telestial kingdom). Then study the lesson and decide how you want to teach the children the scriptural and historical accounts. (See “Preparing Your Lessons,” pp. vi–vii, and “Teaching the Scriptural and Historical Accounts,” pp. vii–ix.)
  2. Additional reading: John 5:28–29 and *Gospel Principles* (31110), chapters 46 and 47.
  3. Select the discussion questions and enrichment activities that will involve the children and best help them achieve the purpose of the lesson.
  4. Make the following wordstrips:  

Celestial Kingdom

Terrestrial Kingdom

Telestial Kingdom
  5. Materials needed:
    - a. A Doctrine and Covenants for each child.
    - b. A Bible.
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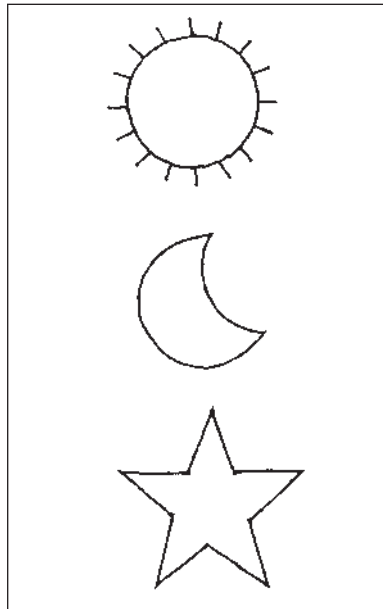
**Suggested Lesson Development**

**Development** Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

**Attention Activity** Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine they are outside on a cloudy night when everything is absolutely dark.

- What do you see?
- What could you see if you had the light of the stars?
- What could you see if you had the light of the moon?
- What could you see if you had the light of the sun?

Have the children open their eyes. Draw pictures of a star, the moon, and the sun on the chalkboard, with the star at the bottom of the chalkboard, the moon above the star, and the sun above the moon.



- If you could choose just one of these sources of light to see by, which would it be? Why?

Explain that Heavenly Father has provided three different places for people to live after they are resurrected. These places are referred to as kingdoms of glory in heaven.

As you explain the following information about these kingdoms, put the corresponding wordstrip next to the drawing of the star, moon, or sun:

- The telestial kingdom is the lowest kingdom. It has a glory compared to the brightness of the stars. (See D&C 76:81.)
- The terrestrial kingdom is the middle kingdom. It has a glory compared to the brightness of the moon. (See D&C 76:71.)
- The celestial kingdom is the highest kingdom. It has a glory compared to the brightness of the sun. (See D&C 76:70.)

You may want to have the children repeat the words on the wordstrips.

Explain that we learn about these kingdoms and who will live in each one from a vision received by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon.

#### Scriptural and Historical Accounts

Tell the children about Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon's vision of heaven, as described in the following historical account. Then discuss Joseph and Sidney's testimony of Jesus Christ and their explanation of the three kingdoms and who will live in each one, as explained in the scriptures listed in the "Preparation" section.

As you discuss the three kingdoms, emphasize that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want all of us to live in the highest level, or degree, of the celestial kingdom with them and our families. To be worthy of the celestial kingdom, we must keep Heavenly Father's commandments and receive important gospel ordinances. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been restored to the earth to help us reach the celestial kingdom.

While Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were working on the translation of the New Testament in 1832, they read John 5:29, which talks about the resurrection of people who have done good things and people who have done evil. This scripture made Joseph and Sidney wonder about heaven. They realized that if God rewards people after they die based on what they did while they were on the earth, then there must be more than one place, or kingdom, in heaven (see section heading to D&C 76). While they thought about these ideas, Joseph and Sidney received a vision of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the three degrees of glory: the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms. This vision is described in Doctrine and Covenants 76.

The vision was given at John Johnson's home in Hiram, Ohio, where Joseph and Emma Smith were living at the time. About twelve other men were in the room and witnessed Joseph and Sidney receiving this vision, but they did not see the vision themselves. Philo Dibble, one of the men present, recorded what he observed:

"Joseph would, at intervals, say: 'What do I see?' as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, 'I see the same.'

"Presently Sidney would say, 'What do I see?' and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, 'I see the same.'

"This manner of conversation was repeated at short intervals to the end of the vision; and during the whole time not a word was spoken by any other person. . . . Not a sound nor motion [was] made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision.

"Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time, in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limp as a rag. Observing such at the close of the vision, Joseph remarked smilingly, 'Sidney is not used to it as I am'" (quoted in Carter E. Grant, *The Kingdom of God Restored*, pp. 156–57).

Joseph Smith continued to learn and teach about the three kingdoms of glory. In 1836 Joseph and others experienced another vision of the Father and the Son and the celestial kingdom while they were in the Kirtland Temple. This vision is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 137. In 1843 Joseph taught some friends that the celestial kingdom is divided into three levels, or degrees. The highest degree is the only part of heaven where people will live with their families. The Prophet taught that a person must be married for eternity in the temple to obtain this highest degree of the celestial kingdom. These teachings are recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.

#### Discussion and Application Questions

Study the following questions and the scripture references as you prepare your lesson. Use the questions you feel will best help the children understand the scriptures and apply the principles in their lives. Reading and discussing the scriptures with the children in class will help them gain personal insights.

- What did Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon see as they thought about the scripture in John 5:29? (D&C 76:19–21.) What testimony did they give of Jesus Christ? (D&C 76:22–24.) How does their testimony strengthen your testimony of Jesus Christ?

- Who will live in the telestial kingdom? (D&C 76:81–82, 103.) Which member of the Godhead will visit the people in the telestial kingdom? (D&C 76:86, 88.) Explain that the Holy Ghost and angels will minister to the people in the telestial kingdom. The people there will know about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ but will never live with them or see them. (See enrichment activity 3.)
- Who will live in the terrestrial kingdom? (D&C 76:71–76.) Which member of the Godhead will visit the people in the terrestrial kingdom? (D&C 76:77.) Explain that Jesus Christ will visit the people in the terrestrial kingdom. The people there will know about Heavenly Father but will never live with him. (See enrichment activity 3.)
- Who will live in the celestial kingdom? (D&C 76:50–52.) Explain that the celestial kingdom will include faithful members of the Church who have been baptized and confirmed and have kept the commandments (see enrichment activity 1). Which members of the Godhead will the people in the celestial kingdom live with? (D&C 76:62; see enrichment activity 3.)
- How did Joseph describe the celestial kingdom in Doctrine and Covenants 137? (D&C 137:1–4.) Whom did Joseph see, besides Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, in this vision of the celestial kingdom? (D&C 137:5.) Remind the children that Alvin was Joseph’s older brother who died before Joseph received the gold plates. Why was Joseph puzzled to see Alvin in the celestial kingdom? (Alvin had not been baptized; D&C 137:6.) What did the Lord tell Joseph about Alvin and other people like him, who had not had the opportunity to hear the gospel and be baptized? (D&C 137:7.) What happens to children who die before they are eight years old? (D&C 137:10.)
- Into how many parts is the celestial kingdom divided? (D&C 131:1.) Who will live in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom? (D&C 131:2–3.) Explain that in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom will be those who have made and kept sacred covenants (promises) in the temple, including being married for eternity in the temple. Remind the children that the highest degree of the celestial kingdom is the only place where families can live together.
- Why would you like to live in the celestial kingdom?

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## Enrichment Activities

You may use one or more of the following activities any time during the lesson or as a review, summary, or challenge.

1. Before class, make a large illustration of the sun out of paper, and cut it into four puzzle pieces. Write one of the following on each piece:
  - a. Be baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
  - b. Receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.
  - c. Receive the temple endowment.
  - d. Be married, or sealed, in the temple.

Explain to the children that we must receive certain ordinances to be able to live with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. Place the four puzzle pieces on the table or floor, with the illustration facing up. Have a child turn over a piece and read what it says. Repeat with the other three pieces. Then have the children put the puzzle together.

- Which of these ordinances have you received? Which do you still need to receive?

Assure the children that if they live righteously, at the proper times they will have opportunities to receive all these ordinances.

2. Prepare the following wordstrips:

Live with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (D&C 76:62).

Become like Heavenly Father (D&C 76:58; 132:20).

Live with my righteous family members (D&C 131:2–4).

Receive a fulness of joy (D&C 138:17).

Write on the chalkboard *If I am worthy to live in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, I can—*.

Invite a child to choose one of the wordstrips, read it, and post it on the chalkboard under the written statement. Discuss with the children the promised blessing. Repeat for each of the other wordstrips. Help the children understand how wonderful it will be in the celestial kingdom, and encourage them to keep the commandments so that they will be worthy to live in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.

3. Make for each child a copy of the worksheet found at the end of this lesson. Ask the children to match the kingdom in the first column with the correct description in the second column by drawing lines between them. If it is not feasible to make a copy for each child, read the descriptions aloud and have the children work together to choose the correct kingdom. (Answers: a-3; b-1; c-2.)
4. Help the children memorize Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–23 through *on the right hand of God*.
5. Sing or say the words to “I Know My Father Lives” (*Children’s Songbook*, p. 5) or “I Lived in Heaven” (*Children’s Songbook*, p. 4).

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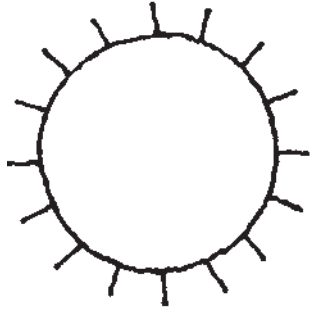
## Conclusion

Testimony	Share with the children your feelings about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and why you want to live with them in the celestial kingdom. Encourage the children to choose to obey the commandments and receive the proper ordinances so that they will be worthy to live with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and with their families in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.
Suggested Home Reading	Suggest that the children study Doctrine and Covenants 76:11–24 at home as a review of this lesson.
Suggested Family Sharing	Encourage the children to share with their families a specific part of the lesson, such as a story, question, or activity, or to read with their families the “Suggested Home Reading.”  Invite a child to give the closing prayer.

# The Three Degrees of Glory

Match the kingdom in the first column with the correct description in the second column by drawing a line between items.

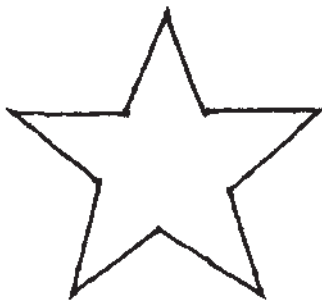
a. Celestial kingdom



b. Terrestrial kingdom



c. Telestial kingdom



1. This kingdom will include good people who did not believe the gospel when they heard it on earth, but believed it after they died. They obeyed some but not all of God's commandments. This kingdom will also include those who accepted the gospel but did not fully obey the commandments.

2. This kingdom will include people who never accepted the gospel on earth or after they died. They disobeyed God's commandments.

3. This kingdom will include members of the Church who had faith in Jesus Christ, repented, obeyed all of God's commandments, and completed the necessary ordinances.