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Celestial, Terrestrial, and
Telestial Kingdoms**

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Multiple Degrees within the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial Kingdoms

David W. Smith

Abstract: *Based on Doctrine and Covenants 131:1, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. There has been a proposal that this teaching is incorrect and instead this scripture should be interpreted as a reference to the three kingdoms described in Doctrine and Covenants 76 (celestial, terrestrial, and telestial). This proposition is based on two claims. First, the word celestial, in Joseph Smith's day, meant heavenly or belonging to heaven, so Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 should be interpreted to mean "in heaven there are three degrees." The second claim is that interpreting Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation based on one sermon by one Apostle, with almost no other apostolic support before or after that sermon. This article shows that the first claim is very likely incorrect and the second is demonstrably false. The article then briefly addresses the question of degrees in the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms.*

In 1832, Joseph Smith saw a vision that heaven consists of three glories or kingdoms, which he called celestial, terrestrial, and telestial.¹ This is now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 76. Ten years later, in 1843, Joseph further taught, "In the celestial glory there [are] three heavens or degrees."² This instruction is now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 131:1. Based on this scripture, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints still currently teaches that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom, the highest glory described in Doctrine and Covenants 76.³

In a 2021 published essay, Shannon Flynn challenges the Church's interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 and argues that this verse is merely a restatement of the three degrees of glory defined in section 76, rather than a description of sub-degrees within the celestial kingdom.⁴ Flynn's proposition has gained traction and seen increasing acceptance.⁵ Because of this, his proposition warrants closer scrutiny.

In this article, I will first describe and then rebut his proposition. I will also briefly address the question of degrees in the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms and how the principle of degrees within the three kingdoms is an example of Heavenly Father's pure and universal love.

The Proposition

Flynn proposes that Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 was a restatement of the three kingdoms described in Doctrine and Covenants 76. Based on this reading, he believes that there are *not* three degrees within the celestial kingdom. This proposition is based on two claims.

The first claim is that Joseph Smith used the word *celestial* in the generic nineteenth-century sense of *heaven* as a whole, and not as a reference only to the celestial glory described in Doctrine and Covenants 76. Flynn assumes this based on contemporary British and American dictionary definitions of the word *celestial*. From this, Flynn concludes that William Clayton, who recorded Joseph Smith's instruction, did not mean that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom.⁶

The second claim is that interpreting Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation with almost no apostolic support. In his research on this topic, Flynn claims to have found that the general concept of degrees in the celestial kingdom was referenced only five times before 1922 (three times by one Apostle, two times by other Church members). He also claims that the Church's current interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 was not even officially published until 1981 and has only been referenced three times in general conference addresses, all by members of the Seventy.⁷

Flynn attributes the Church's current interpretation to a 1922 discourse by Apostle Melvin J. Ballard, who distinctly taught that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. In that discourse, Elder Ballard cites Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4 as support. Flynn states:

I do not believe that Ballard had any idea he was introducing

a radically new concept. . . . It seems likely that the teaching was not yet widely held within the LDS community. In my view, announcing three sub-degrees [within the celestial kingdom] as official church doctrine was a simple mistake on the part of the popular apostle and speaker. However, the concept gradually took hold in the LDS community. . . .

Suffice it to say that the idea started off slowly and gained steam until it is generally believed, I suspect, by the majority of church members today. . . .

Such errors happen regularly in every religion, including the Mormon Church. . . . But no amount of certainty, dogmatism, and conviction-bearing can change the fact that it is wrong.⁸

In the following sections, I will explain why Flynn's first claim is likely incorrect and the second claim is demonstrably false. First, I will suggest that, beginning as early as 1832, Latter-day Saints understood the word *celestial*, in the context of Joseph Smith's 1832 vision (Doctrine and Covenants 76), and not as a reference to the generic Christian heaven. Further, Joseph Smith consistently used the word *celestial* in the same way. Second, I will conclusively demonstrate that the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom was repeatedly taught by Apostles and in Church publications beginning as early as 1847, not just following Elder Ballard's discourse in 1922.

Joseph Smith's Vision and His Use of *Celestial*

Flynn correctly observes that the word *celestial* in the nineteenth century generally meant "heavenly" or "dwelling in heaven."⁹ It is also helpful to note that, in this time period, "Christianity had almost universally embraced Protestant notions of an immediate post-mortem judgment and two diametric afterlife states — Heaven and Hell."¹⁰ Even the term *celestial kingdom* "was a common synonym for heaven in the Christian vernacular."¹¹ Based on this common usage outside of the Church, the first claim in Flynn's proposition is that, because *celestial* and *heaven* were synonymous in the 1800s, a Latter-day Saint would have understood any reference to the celestial kingdom simply as a reference to heaven, including in Joseph Smith's 1843 instruction (Doctrine and Covenants 131:1).¹²

Recognizing how Latter-day Saints would have understood the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's teachings helps explain how they

might have initially received Joseph Smith's 1843 instruction. However, that does not determine what Joseph himself meant. Because William Clayton (the scribe for the instruction) was merely recording Joseph's words,¹³ the relevant question is how Joseph Smith himself understood and used the word *celestial*.

In this portion of my article, I address both Latter-day Saint understanding of the word *celestial* and Joseph Smith's usage of that word. I first suggest that, despite the dictionary definition, Latter-day Saints came to understand the word *celestial* differently than was understood in broader Christianity — as referring to the highest part of heaven, not all of heaven. I then demonstrate that Joseph Smith consistently used the word *celestial* with that same understanding, not as a synonym for heaven in general.

Latter-day Saint understanding of the word *celestial*

The more restrictive Latter-day Saint understanding of the word *celestial* is based on a vision Joseph Smith received in 1832.¹⁴ The introduction to the vision in the Manuscript History of the Church noted: "It appeared self evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body, the term 'heaven', as intended for the Saints eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one."¹⁵ The recorded description of the vision focused on the glories that await humankind in eternity. There were four groups: the ungodly (who do not receive any glory),¹⁶ and those who receive celestial, terrestrial, or telestial glory.¹⁷

Because of this vision, Latter-day Saint understanding of heaven changed to differ from that of Christianity generally.¹⁸ Their use of the word *celestial* also changed to differ from common usage. This suggestion is based on four points, three of which are briefly addressed in this section, and the fourth in the next section.

First, after Joseph Smith's 1832 vision was recorded, copies of the record quickly circulated.¹⁹ The vision's importance to Church members is demonstrated by the fact that it was published just a few months after it was received,²⁰ and it was reprinted in 1835.²¹ Most Church members likely learned about this vision of three kingdoms of glory soon after its publication, either from reading the published version or hearing it preached by missionaries or others.²² Through this reading or preaching, Latter-day Saints would have been exposed to (and likely adopted) this new understanding of the word *celestial* as

a reference to the highest part of heaven, not as a synonym for the generic *heaven*.

Second, missionaries appear to have regularly taught about Joseph's 1832 vision, which would have included teaching that the word *celestial* referred to the highest of three degrees of glory. Evidence for this comes from instructions that Joseph gave in 1837. Shortly before the gospel was first preached in England, Joseph instructed missionaries not to mention this vision of three degrees of glory "until such time as the work was fully established."²³ This instruction would have been unnecessary unless missionaries were regularly preaching about the vision, and thus teaching about *celestial* being the highest glory in heaven, not as synonymous with all of heaven. Further, the restriction on preaching about the vision was limited to England and was only temporary, as evidenced by the vision being published in 1841 in the Church's newspaper in England.²⁴

Third, the concept of *celestial* being the highest kingdom in heaven, not a synonym for the generic *heaven*, appears to have become part of Latter-day Saint consciousness. For example:

- In 1836, a missionary had a vision of "the resurrection of the Celestial Kingdom or the inhabitants thereof," followed by a vision of "the resurrection of the Terrestrial kingdom whose glory was lesser than the celestial."²⁵ This illustrates that the word *celestial* was used in context of Joseph's 1832 vision.
- In 1837, speakers in a high council meeting used the terms *celestial law* and *telestial law* to frame a dispute about modern revelation.²⁶ This illustrates the unique meaning Latter-day Saints assigned to the word *celestial*.
- John Corroll's 1839 history included the concept of celestial, terrestrial, and telestial glories alongside other basic gospel principles such as the sacrament and healing the sick, demonstrating that the concept of *celestial glory* referring to only the highest part of heaven was a basic part of the gospel.²⁷

These three points (widespread dissemination, regular missionary teaching, and examples of Latter-day Saint usage) suggest that Latter-day Saints understood the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's teachings as a reference to the highest degree in heaven, not as a synonym for heaven generally.²⁸ This suggestion is further supported by how Joseph Smith used the word *celestial*, which is addressed next.

Joseph Smith's use of the word *celestial*

In currently available documents, Joseph first used the word *celestial* in the text of his 1832 vision. The word appeared just two weeks later in the text of a revelation from the Lord explaining that inheriting the celestial glory required obedience to God's commandments and that being equal in earthly things was required in order to be equal in heavenly things. These were all new concepts distinctly referring to the celestial glory described in the vision Joseph had experienced just two weeks earlier. The resulting blessing, the Lord further explained, would be standing "independent above all other creatures beneath the Celestial world," referring to those in the celestial glory being above all things.²⁹

Within about a week of this revelation,³⁰ Joseph revised 1 Corinthians 15:40–41 to emphasize the difference between celestial, terrestrial, and telestial glories: "Also Celestial bodies, and bodies Terrestrial, and bodies Telestial; but the glory of the Celestial, one; and the Terrestrial, another; and the Telestial, another."³¹ Again, this distinguishes *celestial* as referring to part of heaven, not all of heaven.

In December 1832, the Lord revealed more information concerning the three glories. Of particular note was the fact that abiding by celestial, terrestrial, or telestial law determines the glory a person receives.³² Again, this revelation emphasized the distinction between the highest (celestial) glory and the lower glories (terrestrial and telestial).

Thus, in all four Joseph Smith documents in which the word *celestial* first appears, it is clearly referring to a specific part of heaven, not to heaven as a whole. His continued use of the word *celestial* remains consistent with this meaning. (See appendix 1 for a review that is too extensive to include here.)

Further, Joseph was focused on helping Latter-day Saints understand the principles of the vision. For example, he wrote a letter in 1834 to priesthood holders explaining more about the concept of law as it pertained to inheriting the celestial glory (taken from the December 1832 revelation). In this letter, he clarified that when he spoke of entering "the heavenly kingdom," he meant "the celestial glory."³³ This would be a confusing statement if the word *celestial* were synonymous with *heaven*.

Also, as historians Michael MacKay and Daniel Belnap noted, Joseph started an effort in the summer of 1832 to better convey what he saw in his 1832 vision. This effort later included the Egyptian Language Documents (ELD) created in 1835, which contained notes

distinguishing celestial, terrestrial, and telesial glories, demonstrating that Joseph and those working with him continued to understand and work toward a way to teach celestial glory versus the lesser glories.³⁴

Joseph likely strove for this better way of teaching because he viewed his 1832 vision as an essential part of the gospel. In a November 1833 letter, which discussed a member who had rejected the 1832 vision, Joseph stated that those who did not accept it and his other revelations "have no fellowship with us."³⁵ In his 1837 instruction to missionaries referenced in the previous section, he included the vision along with the principles of both gathering to Zion and accepting continuing revelation, thus highlighting the essential nature of the vision.³⁶ And a note commenting on the vision in the Manuscript History of the Church stated that "every law, every commandment, every promise" showed the truth of the vision.³⁷

Especially relevant to the context of Joseph's May 1843 instruction was the February 1843 publication of a poetic adaptation of the text of his 1832 vision, which again emphasized the word *celestial* as a specific kingdom in heaven. One stanza provides an apt example:

63. And so the telesial is minister'd to,
By ministers from the terrestrial one,
As terrestrial is, from the celestial throne;
And the great, greater, greatest, seem's stars, moon, and
sun.³⁸

In summary, Joseph Smith first used the word *celestial* in the text of his 1832 vision. Thereafter, he consistently used the word to refer to the celestial glory described in that vision. In 1834, he clarified that when he spoke of entering "the heavenly kingdom" he meant "the celestial glory." He also consistently worked to more effectively teach the doctrine of his vision, which he viewed as an essential part of the gospel. All of this is evidence that he consistently used the word *celestial* to describe part of heaven, not all of heaven. These facts provide context for his May 1843 instruction.³⁹

On 16 May 1843, Joseph and his scribe, William Clayton, stopped for the night at the home of Ben and Melissa Johnson.⁴⁰ During this visit, Joseph taught:

Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant⁴¹ and be married for eternity while in this probation by the power and authority of the Holy priesthood⁴² they will cease to increase when they die (i e) they will not have any

children in the resurrection, but those who are married by the power & authority of the priesthood in this life & continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost will continue to increase & have children in the celestial glory. . . .

In the celestial glory there was three heavens or degrees, and in order to obtain the highest a man must enter into this order of the priesthood and if he dont he cant obtain it. He may enter into the other but that is the end of his kingdom he cannot have an increase.⁴³

Given the entire context of Joseph Smith’s teaching about and use of the word *celestial*, this 1843 instruction about “three degrees” (now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 131:1) is best understood to mean three degrees within the celestial kingdom.

Teachings about Three Degrees in the Celestial Kingdom

The second claim of Flynn’s proposition is demonstrably false. The second claim is that interpreting Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation with almost no apostolic support.

From the 1840s to the 1870s

In his research, Flynn could identify only three instances before 1876 (when Joseph’s instruction was canonized) when the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom was mentioned, and all three instances were from Orson Pratt, who was an Apostle at the time. Based on this incomplete summary, Flynn concludes, “It is my view that Pratt was putting forth his own ill-defined opinions.”⁴⁴ However, this research overlooked several additional references by Elder Pratt and other Apostles. Thus, Flynn’s conclusion that Elder Pratt was advancing “ill-defined opinions” is undermined by the fuller range of available sources.

Latter-day Saints may have first encountered Joseph’s 1843 instruction in print when it was published in the *Deseret News* in 1857.⁴⁵ But Latter-day Saints who read the *Millennial Star* would have read about the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom ten years earlier. An article in the *Millennial Star*, likely written by Apostle Orson Hyde, explained that those who are faithful and receive all priesthood ordinances will be crowned in the celestial kingdom, while others:

May obtain salvation in the celestial kingdom, but not a

celestial crown. Many are called to enjoy a celestial glory, yet few are chosen to wear a celestial crown, or rather, to be rulers in the celestial kingdom.⁴⁶

Although the article does not include the word *degrees* or specify a number, some differentiation of glory within the celestial kingdom is clearly contemplated.

President Brigham Young also taught this principle in April 1854 and again in 1857. In 1854, he discussed those who were more focused on earthly riches than eternal rewards:

Will they be saved? Yes. What! and be prepared to go into the celestial kingdom of God? Yes, if they repent of their sins and turn unto the Lord. ... Will they be crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives? No; but they will be prepared to enter there to serve others.⁴⁷

In an 1857 address Brigham Young further stated:

If we can pass the sentinel Joseph the Prophet, we shall go into the celestial kingdom, and not a man can injure us. . . . Will we all become Gods, and be crowned kings? No, my brethren, there will be millions on millions, even the greater part of the celestial world, who will not be capable of a fullness of that glory, immortality, eternal lives and a continuation of them, yet they will go into the celestial kingdom.⁴⁸

As with the 1847 article, he didn't use the word *degree* or specify a number of levels,⁴⁹ but he taught differentiated levels of glory within the celestial kingdom. He did state the number of degrees in the celestial kingdom two years later, in the final address of the April 1859 general conference:

Man is created what for for [sic] an exaltation to dwell with his Father in the heavens shall I say [in] the heaven of heavens or in the third heavens in the celestial kingdom . . . the object pertaining to the celestial kingdom is so organized [intelligence?] and that intelligence to receive intelligence and intelligence glory upon glory power upon power until they are prepared to enter back again into the presence of their Father and Savior.⁵⁰

Unless he had learned the number independently of Joseph, President Young was relying on Joseph's 1843 instruction to specify the number of degrees.⁵¹ In any case, President Young's statement

is clear: There are three heavens (or degrees) within the celestial kingdom.

A month later, Apostle Orson Pratt discussed the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial glories⁵² and explicitly taught about three degrees in the celestial kingdom. This was noted by another Apostle, Orson Hyde, a week later: “You recollect that Brother Pratt clearly delineated to you that in celestial kingdom differences all [are?] not the same class but he pointed out 3 different degrees in celestial kingdom.” Hyde affirmed Pratt’s teaching by connecting the fruit in the parable of the sower to the celestial kingdom—that the thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and hundredfold fruit represent the three different degrees within that kingdom.⁵³

Thus, no later than mid-1859, Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and Orson Hyde—all of whom were intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith’s teachings and language—clearly taught that there are three degrees in the celestial kingdom. This teaching came more than fifteen years before Joseph Smith’s 1843 instruction was canonized (what is now Doctrine and Covenants 131:1), and more than sixty years before Elder Melvin J. Ballard’s 1922 discourse.

President Young and Elder Pratt would reiterate the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom over the next two decades. For example, in August 1867, President Young taught:

There will a great many people go into the celestial kingdom of our Father and God that will not be crowned gods [and] have influence of god they will be angels servants.⁵⁴

And in January 1873, Elder Pratt taught:

Concerning the nature of this higher state of glory called celestial. Will there be any difference among those who are redeemed into that glory? There will, in some respects. . . . Some who will inherit a portion of that glory will have no families, . . . while others will receive an exaltation and kingdom, and will have wives, children, dominion, greatness and power far above those I first referred to.⁵⁵

Additional examples are listed in appendix 2.

From canonization to the 1920s

Joseph Smith’s 1843 instruction about three degrees in the celestial kingdom was canonized in 1876 as Doctrine and Covenants 131:1.⁵⁶ Flynn identified only two references between 1876 and 1922 to three

degrees in the celestial kingdom. These instances were an 1888 report of a sermon by a stake presidency counselor⁵⁷ and, more importantly, an influential 1893 book by Elder B. H. Roberts, who was then serving in the First Council of the Seventy.⁵⁸

However, Flynn's research overlooked many other examples from Apostles and Church publications. For example, in 1883, Apostle Erastus Snow taught that:

The holy covenant of marriage for time and for all eternity . . . is that which completes the exaltation and glory of the righteous. . . . Many may enter into the glory of God, and become servants in the house of God and in the celestial kingdom of God, who are not able to abide this new and everlasting covenant; but as we are told in the Doctrine and Covenants, with them there is an end to their exaltation.⁵⁹

Another example, and probably the most prominent work overlooked in Flynn's research, was James E. Talmage's *The Articles of Faith*, published by the Church in 1899 and repeatedly published and referenced for over a century.⁶⁰ Talmage was, at this time, a well-respected scientist and gospel scholar, though not yet an Apostle. However, this book had been reviewed by three members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and three other trusted gospel scholars.⁶¹ In his discussion about the degrees of glory, Talmage stated that there were "a multitude of subdivisions" in the celestial kingdom, and cited Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 for support.⁶² This statement has remained nearly unchanged throughout the various editions of the book.⁶³ And, after becoming an Apostle, Talmage quoted that statement almost verbatim in his 1912 publication *The House of the Lord*.⁶⁴

Another Apostle, Orson F. Whitney, also explicitly discussed the principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom in his 1914 book *Gospel Themes: A Treatise on Salient Features of "MORMONISM,"* also published by the Church:

The Prophet also taught that there are grades of glory, even in the celestial kingdom; his exact language being: "In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees" (D. & C. 131:1).⁶⁵

Multiple other Church publications from this period also referenced or discussed this principle (see appendix 2).

Elder Ballard’s discourse

As noted above, Flynn attributes the generally Church-wide interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees within the celestial kingdom as primarily coming from the 1922 discourse by Apostle Melvin J. Ballard. In that sermon, Elder Ballard cites Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 and repeated what had been taught by multiple Apostles and Church Presidents:

Now, I wish to say to you that the only possible candidates to become what God is are those who attain Celestial Glory, and those who fail in that will never, worlds without end, be possible candidates to become what God is. Then I wish to say to you that there are three degrees of glory in the Celestial Kingdom and only those who attain the highest degree of Celestial Glory will be candidates to become what God is.⁶⁶

As noted earlier, Flynn’s research did not identify a reference in a Church manual to three degrees in the celestial kingdom until 1981, and identified only three times in general conference addresses when the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom was referenced, all by members of the Seventy.⁶⁷ However, Flynn’s research overlooked several Church manuals published long before 1981 that discussed this principle. The earliest such manual that I located was published in 1901 and was followed by many subsequent manuals and Church publications discussing this principle (see appendix 2). Flynn’s research also overlooked several references in general conference addresses up through 2000, including references by two Church Presidents and six Apostles (see appendix 2).

The reason for citing references after Elder Ballard’s 1922 discourse is to make the point that the consistent interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 over the last 175 years continues to have support from Church leaders⁶⁸ and is included in current Church publications. For example, the entry “Kingdoms of Glory” in the Church’s “Topics and Questions” portion of Gospel Library states:

From another revelation to the Prophet Joseph, we learn that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. To be exalted in the highest degree and continue eternally in family relationships, we must enter into “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage” and be true to that covenant. In other words, temple marriage is a requirement for obtaining the

highest degree of celestial glory. All who are worthy to enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage will have that opportunity, whether in this life or the next.⁶⁹

From numerous Church publications and discourses by Apostles, it is clear that—far from “start[ing] off slowly and gain[ing] steam”⁷⁰ after Melvin J. Ballard’s 1922 discourse, as asserted in Flynn’s proposition—the principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom was repeatedly taught by Apostles and others many times before (as well as after) the 1922 discourse.

Multiple Degrees in the Terrestrial and Telestial Kingdoms

The established principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom raises a question about the other two kingdoms of glory: Are there multiple degrees within the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms? Some statements by Apostles and in Church publications suggest that there are indeed multiple degrees within those kingdoms.

Doctrine and Covenants 76:98 seems to imply varying degrees within the telestial kingdom:

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.*⁷¹

This verse has been either paraphrased or cited to support the principle of varying degrees in the telestial kingdom. For example, Apostle (later President) Joseph Fielding Smith briefly mentioned the telestial kingdom in the influential book *Doctrines of Salvation* using wording from this verse: “Those who enter into the telestial kingdom, where their glories differ as do the stars of heaven in their magnitude.”⁷² And the current institute manual for the Doctrine and Covenants unequivocally states: “The telestial kingdom is also comprised of various glories (see D&C 76:98).”⁷³

Charles W. Penrose, then in the First Presidency, also noted the following for the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms:

Those who get into the terrestrial kingdom are to have certain qualities that are explained; there are *several degrees in that one glory*; . . .

Then comes the third group. These are they who come forth in the telestial glory, and their glory differs as one star differs from another, and they shall each be judged

according to their works, as all will be. So *there are various degrees* of these people who are brought forth according to their crimes and their punishments and their redemption; they come forth into the glory of the stars.⁷⁴

Relatedly, there have been some suggestions that the number of degrees or gradations may be innumerable. For example, President Brigham Young stated, “Were I to enumerate thousands of different degrees of glory and kingdoms, I probably should over-enumerate the kingdoms God has prepared.”⁷⁵ Elder John A. Widstoe echoed this when he wrote: “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,” which are the celestial, terrestrial, and teletial.⁷⁶

As a summary of the principle of multiple degrees in the celestial, terrestrial, and teletial kingdoms, below is a passage from the original 1899 edition of Talmage’s *The Articles of Faith* (and repeated in his 1912 *The House of the Lord*, written after he had been ordained as an Apostle):

The three kingdoms of widely differing glories *are themselves* organized on an orderly *plan of gradation*. We have seen that the teletial kingdom comprises a multitude of subdivisions; this is also the case, we are told, with the celestial; (*footnote*: [Doctrine and Covenants 131:1]; see also [2 Corinthians 12:1–4]) 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.⁷⁷

Although there have been some references to the existence of degrees in the terrestrial and teletial kingdoms over the years, by far the greatest emphasis by Church leaders has been on the celestial kingdom. This emphasis is not surprising. President Dallin H. Oaks states:

The Lord has chosen to reveal comparatively little about two of these kingdoms of glory [the terrestrial and teletial]. In contrast, the Lord has revealed much about the highest kingdom of glory . . .

The purpose of the doctrine and policies of this restored Church is to prepare God’s children for salvation in the

celestial glory and, more particularly, for exaltation in its highest degree.⁷⁸

But even what little has been revealed about the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms highlights the pure and universal love of Heavenly Father.⁷⁹ A teaching by President Dallin H. Oaks on the three kingdoms generally might also be applied to degrees within those kingdoms:

The ultimate destiny of all who live on the earth is not the inadequate idea of heaven for the righteous and the eternal sufferings of hell for the rest. God's loving plan for His children includes this reality taught by our Savior, Jesus Christ: "In my Father's house are many mansions."

The revealed doctrine of the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that *all the children of God*—with exceptions too limited to consider here—will ultimately inherit one of three kingdoms of glory, even the least of which "surpasses all understanding." . . .

Under that loving plan, there are multiple kingdoms—many mansions—so that all of God's children will inherit a kingdom of glory whose laws they can comfortably "abide."⁸⁰

Summary and Conclusion

Based on Doctrine and Covenants 131:1, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. Shannon Flynn proposes that this scripture instead refers to the three kingdoms described in Doctrine and Covenants 76 and therefore does not indicate that there are three degrees in the celestial kingdom. This proposition is based on two claims: (1) the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's day simply meant "heavenly," and (2) the idea of three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation with little apostolic support.

Responding to the first claim, I have suggested that, beginning as early as 1832, Latter-day Saints understood the word *celestial* in the context of Joseph Smith's 1832 vision of three degrees of glory. Further, Joseph Smith consistently used the word *celestial* to refer to the highest glory in that vision, not to all of heaven. Thus, Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 is best understood as a reference to the celestial kingdom.

I have shown that the second claim is demonstrably false. The principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom was taught by

Brigham Young, Orson Hyde, and Orson Pratt no later than 1859. The principle was also repeatedly taught or referenced by Apostles and in Church publications before (as well as after) Melvin J. Ballard's 1922 discourse. Thus, Elder Ballard's discourse was simply one of a long line of addresses and publications that taught this principle.

The importance of three degrees in the celestial kingdom was most recently highlighted by Dallin H. Oaks, then a Counselor in the First Presidency. In an extended discourse in the October 2023 general conference on the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms, he noted:

In the "celestial" glory *there are three levels*, of which the highest is exaltation in the celestial kingdom. . . . Through revelation, God has revealed the eternal laws, ordinances, and covenants that must be observed to develop the godly attributes necessary to realize this divine potential. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints focuses on these because the purpose of this restored Church is to prepare God's children for salvation in the celestial glory and, more particularly, for *exaltation in its highest degree*.

God's plan, founded on eternal truth, requires that exaltation can be attained only through faithfulness to the covenants of an eternal marriage between a man and a woman in the holy temple, which marriage will ultimately be available to all the faithful.⁸¹

As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "Any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, *and the whole law too*."⁸² Understanding the law that governs exaltation in the celestial kingdom allows us to choose to abide by that law (or at least desire to do so)⁸³ in order to receive the fulness of the blessings promised by a loving Heavenly Father.⁸⁴

Appendix 1: The Word *Celestial* in Joseph Smith's Documents

This review of the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's documents is based on a search on the Joseph Smith Papers (JSP) website. There is also at least one instance of the word appearing in *The Words of Joseph Smith* but not on the JSP website.

The Joseph Smith Papers

The JSP website search yielded 161 results (focused only on the Documents/Papers category). Many results were duplicates (such as the word appearing in multiple copies of the same revelation), some results are from History, 1838–1856 (which was simply a compilation of other notes), some results are from the historical introductions or footnotes, and some results are from individuals other than Joseph Smith.⁸⁵ These are all excluded from the number of documents analyzed in this article.

There were thirty-seven Joseph Smith documents where the word *celestial* appears, as shown in table 1. The word is almost always accompanied by allusions to the celestial glory described in the February 1832 vision (in bold). Where there are no allusions, the wording clearly distinguishes the *celestial kingdom* from other kingdoms in the eternities, thus showing that Joseph Smith did not use *celestial* as a synonym for the generic *heaven*.

On the allusions noted below, it is helpful to recognize that many descriptors of the celestial glory were also used in Protestant teachings about heaven. The difference between that Protestant usage and Joseph Smith’s usage was emphasis, as Richard Bushman noted:

Protestant sermons on heaven spoke mostly of surcease from sorrows and the joy of knowing Christ. . . . Ideas highlighted in “The Vision,” like the possibility of becoming “joint heirs with Christ” and partaking of his glory, were minor Protestant themes. Joseph’s revelation, by contrast, paraphrases one biblical scripture after another on the exalted condition of humans in the celestial heavens.⁸⁶

It is Joseph Smith’s themes that are repeatedly alluded to in his documents, not the Protestant themes.

Table 1. Uses of the word *celestial* by Joseph Smith. Italicized text is my editorial notes. Bolded text notes allusions to the celestial glory described in Doctrine and Covenants 76. Bracketed text is from the Joseph Smith Papers.

Document	Text
16 February 1832 Vision ⁸⁷	<i>The text is extensive and available at the Joseph Smith Papers website.</i>

Document	Text
1 March 1832 Revelation ⁸⁸	To advance the cause which ye have espoused [espoused] to the salvation of man and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven that you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things yea and earthly things also for the obtaining of heavenly of heavenly things for if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly thing[s] for if ye will that I give unto you a place in the celestiel world you must prepare yourselves by doing <the> thing which I have commanded & required of you & now verily thus saith the Lord it is expedient that all things be done unto my glory . . . whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given to you that through the providenc of your Father notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you you may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the Celestial world that you may come up unto the crown prepared for you and be made rulers over many kingdom[s].
Between 1–8 March 1832 Revision ⁸⁹	<i>The Joseph Smith revision of the New Testament included revised wording of 1 Corinthians 15:40–41. Although celestial is original to the KJV, Joseph included it in a description of heaven that clearly echoes his vision a couple weeks earlier.</i> <i>Original KJV:</i> 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. ⁹⁰ <i>Joseph Smith Revision:</i> Also Celestial bodies, and bodies Terrestrial, and bodies Telestial; but the glory of the Celestial, one; and the Terrestrial, another; and the Telestial, another. ⁹¹
27–28 December 1832 Revelation ⁹²	<i>The text is extensive and available at the Joseph Smith Papers website.</i>
4 January 1833 Letter ⁹³	Repent of all your sins and be baptized in water for the remission of them, in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Ghost , and receive the ordinance of the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power , that ye may receive the holy spirit of God, and this according to the holy scriptures, and of the Book of Mormon; and the only way that man can enter into the Celestial kingdom.
5 December 1833 Letter ⁹⁴	Our trust is in God and we are determined by his grace assisting us to maintain the cause and hold out faithful to the end that we may be crowned with crowns of celestial glory and enter into that rest⁹⁵ that is prepared for the children of God .
10 December 1833 Letter ⁹⁶	I cannot learn from any communication by the spirit to me that Zion has forfeited her claim to a celestial crown notwithstanding the Lord has caused her to be thus afflicted .

Document	Text
16–17 December 1833 Revelation [D&C 101] ⁹⁷	I must gather to gether my people according to the parable of the wheat and the tares that the wheat may be secured in the garner to possess eternal life and be crowned with celestial glory when I come in the Kingdom of my fathe[r] .
February 1834 Letter ⁹⁸	<p>The Father of our spirits, in providing a sacrifice for his creatures, a plan of redemption, a power of atonement, a scheme of salvation, having as one of its great objects, to bring men back into the presence of the King of heaven, crown them in the celestial glory, and make them heirs with his Son to that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. . . .</p> <p>We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the more conspicuous are his views, & the greater his enjoyments, until he has overcome the evils of this life and lost every desire of sin; and like the ancients, arrives to that point of faith that he is wrapped in the glory and power of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment: he must have been instructed into the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees . . . it is necessary for men to receive an understanding concerning the laws of the heavenly kingdom, before they are permitted to enter it: we mean the celestial glory. . . .</p> <p>God has in reserve a time, or period appointed in his own bosom, when he will bring all his subjects, who have obeyed his voice and kept his commandments, into his celestial rest.</p>
March 1834 Letter ⁹⁹	For a moment reflect, what could have been the purpose in our Father in giving to us a law? Was it that it might be obeyed, or disobeyed? And think further too, not only the propriety, but the importance of attending to his laws in every particular We can only say, that if an anticipation of the joys of the celestial glory, as witnessed to the hearts of the humble is not sufficient, we will leave with yourselves the result of your own diligence; for God ere long, will call <i>all</i> his servants before him, and there from His own hand they will receive a just recompense and a righteous reward for all their labors.
22 June 1834 Revelation [D&C 105] ¹⁰⁰	[The Saints] are full of all manner of evil and do not impart of their substanc[e] as becometh saints; to the poor and afflicted among them and are not united, according to the union of required by the law of the celestial kingdom and Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the Celestial kingdom

Document	Text
5 December 1834 Blessing ¹⁰¹	Prolong his [Oliver Cowdery's] life to a good old age, and bring him in peace to his end, and to rejoice with thy saints, even the sanctified , in the celestial kingdom.
1 March 1835 Blessing to Willard Snow ¹⁰²	You shall go to distant lands and if you desire it with all your heart you shall return. But if you desire you may be received up into the bosom of your Heavenly Father in Distant lands, from all trouble into the celestial kingdom. ¹⁰³
Fall 1835, Egyptian Alphabet ¹⁰⁴	[2.23] Ebethcha the greatest place of hapiness where God resides the Celesstial Kingdom. <i>Alternate Text:</i> The heaven of heavens, <wh[e]re god resides Ce[lestial]. K[ingdom].>the greatest place of hap.
Fall 1835, Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language ¹⁰⁵	[2.23] The celestial Kingdom where God dwells . [2.30] Lish Zi hoe oop lota: The glory of the celestial Kingdom: The connection of attributes; many parts perfected, and compounded into one Having been united; being united that which will be united, one glory above all other glories, as the the [sun?] excels in the light Moon in light , this glory excels being filled: with the same glory equality . [2.36] Jah-ni hah: one delegated from the highest soar acting in or b[e]ing clothed with the power of another; one from sent from the Celestial Kingdom . ¹⁰⁶ [2.42] Kolob. signifies the first creation nearer to the celestial, ¹⁰⁷ or the residence of Lord , first in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time, the measurement according according to celestial time. ¹⁰⁸
23 October 1835 Prayer ¹⁰⁹	And also that [God] will assist all others who desire, accordingly to his commandments , to go up and purchase inheritances; and all this easily and without perplexity, and trouble; and finally, that in the end he will save us in his Celestial Kingdom.
12 November 1835 Discourse to the Twelve ¹¹⁰	The order of the house of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same, and we shall finally roll into ¹¹¹ the celestial kingdom of God and enjoy it forever; — you need an endowment brethren in order that you may be prepared and able to overcome all things .
10 December 1835 Prayer ¹¹²	The way be prepared before them, that they may journey to the land of Zion and be established, on their inheritances, to enjoy undisturbe[d], peace and happiness for ever, and ultimately, to be crowned with everlasting life in the celestial kingdom of God.

Document	Text
21 January 1836 Visions [D&C 137] ¹¹³	I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell, — I saw the transcendant beauty of the gate that enters , through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire, also the blasing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son . . . I saw . . . my brother Alvin that has long since slept, and marveled how it was that he had obtained this an inheritance <in> this <that> kingdom , seeing that he had departed this life, before the Lord <had> set his hand to gather Israel <the second time> and had not been baptized for the remission of sins — Thus said came the voice <of the Lord un>to me saying all who have died with[out] 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 . . . I also beheld that all children who die before they arive to the years of accountability, are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven . . . I finally saw the 12 in the celestial kingdom of God
5 January 1841 Discourse ¹¹⁴	We came to this earth that we might have a body, & present it pure before before God in the celestial kingdom. . . . This earth will be roled back into the presence of God & crowned with celestial glory.
26 January 1841 Letter ¹¹⁵	Be assured of my continued regard for your welfare and for the prosperity of the Saints in Kirtland, and I pray that they may prosper in every good word and work and after the afflictions and tribulations of mortality be crowned with everlasting joy in the celestial kingdom of our God.
6 January 1842 Journal Entry ¹¹⁶	Truly this is a day long to be remembered . . . a day in which those things begin to be made manifest which have been hid from <before> the foundations of the world. & which Jehovah has promised should be made known in his own due time. unto his servants, to prepare. the earth for the return of his glory, even a celestial glory; and a kingdom of Priests & Kings to God & the Lamb forever
30 January 1842 Discourse ¹¹⁷	That the God & father of our Lord Jesus Christ was once the same as the Son or Holy Ghost but having redeemed a world became the eternal God of that world he had a son Jesus Christ who redeemed this earth the same as his father had a world which made them equal & the Holy Ghost would do the same in his turn & so would all the Saints who inherited a Celestial glory so their would be Gods many & Lords many

Document	Text
15 March 1842 Book of Abraham Printing ¹¹⁸	<p>Fig. 1. Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God. First in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. The measurement according to the celestial time; which, celestial time, signifies one day to a cubit.¹¹⁹</p> <p>Fig. 2. Stands next to Kolob, called by the Egyptians Oliblish, which is the next grand governing creation, near to the celestial or the place where God resides.</p>
20 March 1842 Discourse ¹²⁰	<p>Baptism is a sign, ordained of God for the believer in Christ to take upon himself in order to enter into the kingdom of God. . . . It is a sign of command which God hath set for man to enter into the this Kingdom of God those who seek to enter in any other will way will seek in vain, for God will not receive those neither will the angels acknowledge their works as accepted, for they have not taken upon themselves those ordinances & signs which God ordained for man to receive in order to receive a celestial glory, & God had decreed that all that <who> will not obey his voice shall not escape the damnation of hell, . . . God hath decreed & ordained that man should repent of all his sins & Be Baptized for the remission of his sins then he can come to God in the name of Jesus Christ in faith then we have the promise of the Holy Ghost.</p>
February 1843 Poem ¹²¹	<p><i>The text is extensive and available at the Joseph Smith Papers website.</i></p>
17–18 March 1843 Letter ¹²²	<p>And if you have a <would only> notion to join me before you die, count the cost as Jesus says, and go for eternal reward in the celestial Kingdom of God, independent of mobs, persecutions, this world's goods, or the highest honors of the Mammon of unrighteousness.¹²³</p>
23 March 1843 Blessing to Joseph Kingsbury ¹²⁴	<p>I Seal the[e] up to come forth in the first reserection unto Eternal Life — And thy Companion Caroline [Whitney Kingsbury] who is now dead thou Shalt have in the first Reserection . . . no one Shall have power to take her from thee, And you both Shall be crowned and enthroned to dwell together in a Kingdom in the Celestial Glory in the presents of God.</p>
2 April 1843 Instruction ¹²⁵	<p>Then the white stone mentioned in Rev. c 2 v 17 is the Urim & Thummim whereby all things pertaining to an higher order of kingdoms even all kingdoms¹²⁶ will be made known and a the white stone is given to each of those who come into this the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word.</p>

Document	Text
14 May 1843 Discourse ¹²⁷	That more sure word of prophecy that they were sealed in the heavens & had the promise of eternal live in the kingdom of God —Then knowledge through our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ — is the grand key that unlocks the glories & misteries of the kingdom of heaven . . . the main key that unlocks the heavens & puts in our possession the glories of the celestial world.
16 May 1843 Instruction ¹²⁸	Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity while in this probation by the power and authority of the Holy priesthood they will cease to increase when they die (i e) they will not have any children in the resurrection, but those who are married by the power & authority of the priesthood in this life & continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost will continue to increase & have children in the celestial glory. . . . In the celestial glory there was three heavens or degrees, and in order to obtain the highest a man must enter into this order of the priesthood and if he dont he cant obtain it. He may enter into the other but that is the end of his kingdom he cannot have an increase.
25 November 1843 Remarks ¹²⁹	If any man commit adultery He could not received the celestial kingdom of God even if he was saved in any kingdom ¹³⁰ it could not be the celestial kingdom.
21 January 1844 Discourse ¹³¹	Any person who is exhalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law & the whole law to[o] How many will be able to abide a celestial law & go through & recieve their exhaltation I am unable to say but many are called & few are chosen.
10 March 1844 Discourse ¹³²	By this we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ie Elijah To obtain this sealing is to make our calling and election sure which we ought to give all diligence to accomplish there are two sins agains which this power does not secure or prevail they are "The sin against the Holy Ghost" And "shedding of innocent Blood" which is equivelant to "crucifying the son of God afresh & putting him to an open shame" Those who do these it is impossible to renew unto repentance for they are delivered to the buffettings of satan untill the day of redemptions illustrated the case of David said he could not obtain celestial Glory and the reason why he had any hope or obtained a Promise that of his seed one should be raised up to reign over Israel forever was because that he had not spoken against the spirit & because he had not done this he was renewed unto repentance and obtained prom[i]se that God would not leave his soul in Hell ¹³³

Document	Text
15 March 1844 Blessing to John and Catharine Wilkie ¹³⁴	May their hearts expand and become enlarged to receive the fulness: of the blessings of <the> Kingdom of heaven . . . and their faith increase from day to day until they shall have power to lay hold on the blessings of God and the gifts of the spirit until they are satisfied, and finally may they live to a good old age and when they have lived while they desire life may the[y] die in peace and be received into the mansions of eternal life and enjoy a celestial glory for ever and ever.
7 April 1844 Discourse ¹³⁵	Those who have died in the faith are now in the selestial kingdom ¹³⁶ of God, they have gone to await the resurrection of the dead to go to the celestial glory, while their is many who die who will have to wait many years, But I am authorized to say to you my friends in the name of the Lord that you may wait for your friends to come forth to meet you in Eternity in the morn ¹³⁷ <i>of the celestial world</i> , those Saints who have been murdered in the persecution shall triumph in the celestial world.
12 May 1844 Discourse ¹³⁸	In order for you to receive your children to yourself, you must have a promise, some ordinance ¹³⁹ some blessing— or else it may be an angel— they must rise just as they died— we can there hail our lovely infants ¹⁴⁰ with the same glory, the same loveliness in the Celestial glory where they all enjoy alike .

12 May 1844 discourse

There is an additional instance of the word *celestial* in the text of Joseph Smith's 12 May 1844 discourse as published in *The Words of Joseph Smith* by Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook that does not appear in the JSP version of that discourse.

The original text was written by Thomas Bullock at the time of the discourse (and included in the JSP).¹⁴¹ The text was inscribed into the Manuscript History of the Church probably in late 1855 or early 1856 with important insertions¹⁴² and published in August 1857¹⁴³ (and included in *The Words of Joseph Smith*). A comparison of the original text with the altered text, as shown in table 2, notes the differences.

Ehat and Cook mistakenly attribute the expanded text to Joseph Smith, instead of the more likely George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, or Brigham Young.¹⁴⁴ However, despite the text being added in the 1850s, the insertions are another point of evidence to refute Flynn's second claim, as Ehat and Cook noted:

Table 2. Alterations to Joseph Smith’s May 1844 Discourse.

Original	With Insertions
<p>My text is 14 John In my Fathers house are many mansions &c In my Father’s Kingdom are many Kingdoms — in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint heirs with me — I do not believe the method-ist doctrine of sending honest men, and noble minded men to hell, along with the murderer and adulterer — they may hurl all their hell and fiery billows upon me, for they will roll off me as fast as they come on — but I have an order of things to save the poor fellows at any rate, and get them saved for I will send men to preach to them in prison and save them if I can. there is baptism &c for those who are alive, and baptism for the dead, all who died without the knowledge of the gospel I am going on in my progress for eternal life</p>	<p>My text is <i>on the resurrection of the dead, which you will find in the 14th ch. of John.</i> “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” <i>It should be,</i> “in my Father’s Kingdom are many Kingdoms”, in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint heirs with me. I do not believe the Methodist doctrine of sending honest men, and noble minded men to hell, along with the murderer and adulterer; they may hurl all their hell and fiery billows upon me, for they will roll off me as fast as they come on. But I have an order of things to save the poor fellows at any rate, and get them saved; for I will send men to preach to them in prison, and save them if I can. <i>There are mansions¹⁴⁵ for those who obey a celestial law, and there are other mansions for those who come short of that law; every man in his own order.</i> There is baptism &c for those <i>to exercise</i> who are alive, and baptism for the dead who died without the knowledge of the gospel. I am going on in my progress for eternal life</p>

Admittedly, D&C 131:1 could be interpreted as “In the heavens, there are the three glories: celestial, terrestrial and telestial.” However, Joseph Smith clearly indicates in this sentence [about obeying a celestial law] that there are differences of glory within the Celestial Kingdom. This, therefore, effectively eliminates this possible alternate interpretation.¹⁴⁶

Appendix 2: References to Degrees in the Celestial Kingdom after 1843

There are numerous references to degrees in the celestial kingdom after 1843. Below are the date, speaker, and type of source. For works available online, I provide only the citation in the cited note. For works not available online, I include the quotation in the bulleted list.

Discourses or articles by Church leaders from 1847 to 1925

The following are discourses or articles by Church leaders that I identified from 1847 to 1925 that explicitly reference the principle of degrees

in the celestial kingdom. Beginning in 1876, most references specify that there are three degrees.

- 15 January 1847, Orson Hyde, newspaper article¹⁴⁷
- 6 April 1854, Brigham Young, general conference address¹⁴⁸
- 8 March 1857, Brigham Young, address in the Tabernacle¹⁴⁹
- 7 April 1859, Brigham Young, general conference address¹⁵⁰
- 8 May 1859, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle¹⁵¹
- 15 May 1859, Orson Hyde, address in the Tabernacle¹⁵²
- 28 August 1859, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle¹⁵³
- 27 August 1867, Brigham Young, address in Lehi, Utah¹⁵⁴
- 7 October 1869, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle¹⁵⁵
- 19 January 1873, Orson Pratt, address in Salt Lake City¹⁵⁶
- 30 May 1875, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle¹⁵⁷
- 24 June 1883, Erastus Snow, address in Parowan, Utah¹⁵⁸
- 10 November 1918, George F. Richards, address at a mission conference¹⁵⁹
- 22 September 1922, Melvin J. Ballard, address in Ogden Tabernacle¹⁶⁰
- 25 October 1925, Melvin J. Ballard, address in the Tabernacle¹⁶¹

Church publications from 1893 to 1955

The following are Church publications (or works published under the direction of Church leaders) between 1893 and 1955 that explicitly reference the principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom (sometimes using the phrase “highest degree in the celestial kingdom”).

- 1893, B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*¹⁶²
- 1899, James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*¹⁶³
- 1901, unknown writer, Young Men Mutual Improvement Association lesson manual¹⁶⁴
- 1904, Joseph B. Keeler, reference book for Church schools¹⁶⁵
- 1912, James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*¹⁶⁶
- 1914, Orson F. Whitney, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums lesson book¹⁶⁷
- January and May 1922, unknown writer, lesson guides for the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association¹⁶⁸
- 1930, unknown writer, British Mutual Improvement Association lesson manual¹⁶⁹

- » *Quotation*: "In the celestial or highest glory that God can confer on man—there are three degrees (Section 131:1–3)."
- 1933, unknown writer, Sunday School manual¹⁷⁰
- 1941, unknown writer, Sunday School manual¹⁷¹
 - » *Quotation*: "Marriage is necessary to those who would aspire to the highest degree in the celestial kingdom."
- 1941, William E. Berrett, lesson book for Church seminaries¹⁷²
 - » *Quotation*: "Within each glory [celestial, terrestrial, and telestial] there are again numerous divisions or gradations according to the worthiness of the individuals who enter therein. Concerning the celestial glory, for example, the Prophet said: [Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4]."
- October 1942, John A. Widtsoe, *Improvement Era* article¹⁷³
- 1948, Joseph Fielding Smith, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums lesson book¹⁷⁴
 - » *Quotation*: "There will be many who shall not be given the exaltation, and in the celestial kingdom in their saved condition are barred from passing by the angels and the gods who stand to guard the way to the exaltation and continuation of the seeds forever (Doctrine and Covenants 131; 132:16–17, 19–22)."
- March 1948, John A. Widstoe, *Improvement Era* article¹⁷⁵
- 1955, William E. Berrett, Sunday School manual¹⁷⁶

General conference addresses from 1940 to 2000

The following are general conference addresses from 1940 to 2000 that explicitly reference the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom. I include the position of the speaker after the name. I also note whether the reference was an explicit discussion or a passing reference (usually with a phrase like "the highest degree in the celestial kingdom").

- October 1940, George F. Richards, Apostle, reference¹⁷⁷
- April 1949, Milton R. Hunter, Seventy, discussion¹⁷⁸
- October 1950, Bruce R. McConkie, Seventy, discussion¹⁷⁹
- April 1957, Bruce R. McConkie, Seventy, discussion¹⁸⁰
- April 1957, Harold B. Lee, Apostle, discussion¹⁸¹
- October 1959, George Q. Morris, Apostle, discussion¹⁸²
- April 1961, Delbert L. Stapley, Apostle, reference¹⁸³

- April 1964, David O. McKay, President of the Church, reference¹⁸⁴
- October 1964, Spencer W. Kimball, Apostle, discussion¹⁸⁵
- October 1969, Milton R. Hunter, Seventy, discussion¹⁸⁶
- October 1988, Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Church, reference¹⁸⁷
- April 1989, Royden G. Derrick, Seventy, discussion¹⁸⁸
- October 1991, Gordon B. Hinckley, Counselor in the First Presidency, reference¹⁸⁹

There are numerous other instances when Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4 is quoted without comment or a repetition of something like the “highest degree of the celestial kingdom.” I have not included those references.

Writings by Church members and others from 1888 to 1911

Based on his research, Flynn concluded that Latter-day Saints generally did not believe in degrees in the celestial kingdom before the 1920s.¹⁹⁰ However, in addition to the Church leaders and publications already referenced, there are multiple instances of Church members writing about this principle. The following are writings by Church members I identified from 1888 to 1911 that explicitly referenced the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom.

- 2 June 1888, Joseph E. Taylor, discourse in Logan Temple¹⁹¹
- 15 July 1893, Alfred Peterson, letter to a newspaper¹⁹²
- March 1902, John Nicholson, newspaper editorial¹⁹³
- 20 August 1903, unknown writer, newspaper editorial¹⁹⁴
- 21 January 1909, William A. Morton, newspaper editorial¹⁹⁵
- 15 June 1911, S. N. L., newspaper editorial¹⁹⁶

I also found a reference by Christian ministers who included this principle in a critique of Latter-day Saint doctrine. This reference is included here simply to demonstrate that even non-Latter-day Saints recognized that Saints in the early 1900s were taught about the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom:

- 4 June 1907, Christian ministers, statement critiquing Latter-day Saint doctrine¹⁹⁷



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Notes

1. See "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1.
2. "Instruction, 16 May 1843," p. 15–16, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/3.
3. See "Kingdoms of Glory," Topics and Questions, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/kingdoms-of-glory; Dallin H. Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory," *Liahona*, November 2023, 26–29, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2023/10/17oaks.
4. See Shannon P. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees in the Celestial Kingdom?" in *Continuing Revelation: Essays on Doctrine*, ed. Bryan Buchanan (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2021), 127–40. This is an expansion of his blog post, see Shannon P. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees in the Celestial Kingdom?" *By Common Consent* (blog), 19 April 2018, bycommonconsent.com/2018/04/18/three-sub-degrees-in-the-celestial-kingdom/. A one-paragraph review of Flynn's essay is included in Ron Bartholomew, "Continuing Revelation: Essays on Doctrine by Bryan Buchanan," *Journal of Mormon History* 49, no. 1 (2023): 152, doi.org/10.5406/24736031.49.1.17.
5. See Chad Nielsen, "In the celestial glory there was three heavens," *Times And Seasons* (blog), 15 March 2023, archive.timesandseasons.org/2023/03/in-the-celestial-glory-there-was-three-heavens/; Kurt Manwaring, "Are There 3 Degrees in the Celestial Kingdom?" *From the Desk* (blog), 11 May 2025, fromthedesk.org/sub-degrees-of-glory-celestial-kingdom-flynn/; Steven C. Harper, *Doctrine and Covenants Contexts* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2024), 245–46, byustudies.byu.edu/online-book/doctrine-and-covenants-contexts/1353. For an earlier example of this proposition, see Kevin Barney, "Is the Celestial Kingdom Divided into Three Subdegrees?" *By Common Consent* (blog), 18 March 2006, bycommonconsent.com/2006/03/18/is-the-celestial-kingdom-divided-into-three-subdegrees/.
6. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees?" 131. See also Harper, *Doctrine and Covenants Contexts*, 246.
7. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?" 132–34, 136, 138–39.
8. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?" 136, 139–40.
9. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. "celestial," archive.org/details/americanationa1websrich/page/352/mode/2up.

10. Jim Hansen, "Degrees of Glory: A Brief History of Heaven and Graded Salvation," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 59 (2023): 100, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/degrees-of-glory-a-brief-history-of-heaven-and-graded-salvation. See also Elizabeth Tingle, "Changing Western European Visions of Christian Afterlives, 1350–1700: Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory," in *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c. 1300–1700*, ed. Philip Booth and Elizabeth Tingle (Boston: Brill, 2021), 39–71; Gary Scott Smith, *Heaven in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47–69. See also references in note 14.
11. J. B. Haws, "Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation," in *The Doctrine and Covenants, Revelations in Context*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, Alonzo L. Gaskill (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), rsc.byu.edu/doctrine-covenants-revelations-context/joseph-smith-emanuel-swedenborg-section-76-importance-bible-latter-day-revelation.
12. See Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?" 130. Flynn specifically names William Clayton, who was the scribe for Joseph's 1843 instruction. However, the idea can be applied to any Latter-day Saint.
13. By May 1843, Clayton had studied and taught Joseph Smith's revelations since Clayton's conversion in 1837, had heard Joseph preach regularly since 1840, and had served as his personal scribe since 1842. He would therefore have been familiar with Joseph Smith's usage of the word *celestial*. See James B. Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2002), 7–10, 17–18, 24–27, 63–71, 105–20.
14. See Mark Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 319–30; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 195–202; Jubal Lotze, "Joseph Smith's Vision of the Celestial Kingdom: Context, Content, Ritualization, Canonization, and Theological Implications" (master's thesis, BYU, 2020), 6–9, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/8108/.
15. "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 183, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/189.
16. In the vision text, the word *glory* is not used for this group. In a December 1832 revelation, the Lord revealed that this group inherits "a kingdom that is not a kingdom of glory." "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," p. 36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/4. See also character 2.26 in "Comparison of Characters," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/back/comparison-of-characters.
17. See "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 1–10, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1. The words *bodies*, *glory*, and *world* are used to describe three groups who

- receive a glory, but *kingdom* is not. Rather, associating *kingdom* with celestial, terrestrial, or telesial would first occur in a December 1832 revelation. See "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," p. 34–36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/2.
18. See Matthew McBride, "The Vision," *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Matthew McBride and James Goldberg (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/the-vision.
 19. See Historical introduction, "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1#historical-intro.
 20. See Historical introduction, "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 2n10. See also, "Revelations printed in The Evening and the Morning Star, June 1832–June 1833," p. 2–3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelations-printed-in-the-evening-and-the-morning-star-june-1832-june-1833/4.
 21. See "Revelations printed in Evening and Morning Star, January 1835–June 1836," p. 27–30, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelations-printed-in-evening-and-morning-star-january-1835-june-1836/7.
 22. See McBride, "The Vision."
 23. "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]," p. 762, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838/216.
 24. See "A Vision," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 2, no. 2 (June 1841): 17–21, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/73/rec/1. See also "Revelation Given December 27, 1832," *Millennial Star* 1, no. 10 (February 1841): 245–46, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/118/rec/1.
 25. "Daybook (31 December 1835 - 3 January 1837)," p. 63, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/j6Wy. The missionary was Wilford Woodruff, who at this time was not a Church leader.
 26. See entry for 24 April 1837, in "Minute Book 2," p. 74, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/76. A Church council heard charges against Lyman Wight for teaching that the older version of the revelations, the Book of Commandments, was superior (a "celestial law") to the new version of the revelations, the Doctrine and Covenants (a "telesial law"). The council sanctioned him for this teaching. The use of *celestial* and *telesial* did not seem to be the problem; rather, the issue was Wight preferring old revelation to new revelation.
 27. See "John Corrill, "A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1839," p. 46–47, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-corrill-a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-christ-of-latter-day-saints-1839/45.

28. Contrary to Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), 52–54; Underwood, “Saved or Damned: Tracing a Persistent Protestantism in Early Mormon Thought,” *BYU Studies* 25, no. 3 (1985): 85–103, byustudies.byu.edu/article/saved-or-damned-tracing-a-persistent-protestantism-in-early-mormon-thought. Underwood claims that among Latter-day Saints, even after Joseph’s 1832 vision, the term *celestial kingdom* “was understood in the usual way as a synonym for heaven.” He supports this claim by positing that “discussion, even mention, of the ‘Terrestrial’ or ‘Telestial’ kingdoms . . . appears to have been almost nonexistent” (*The Millenarian World*, 53). This argument from silence is untenable on two counts. First, as shown in this article, concepts from the vision were likely well known by Latter-day Saints, so it is safe to assume that they used terms like *celestial* with that understanding. Second, even in today’s Church, references to the terrestrial or telestial kingdoms are rare. For example, a word search of the LDS General Conference Corpus (lds-general-conference.org/) for the years 2000–2025 showed twenty uses of *telestial*, twenty of *terrestrial*, and an astounding 372 of *celestial*. This disparity appears despite the contemporary universal understanding of there being three degrees of glory. Consequently, a similar imbalance in the 1830s—a period for which surviving records are limited—cannot support the argument that early Latter-day Saints retained a binary heaven-or-hell framework.
29. “Revelation, 1 March 1832 [D&C 78],” p. 1–2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-march-1832-dc-78/1.
30. Whether the 1 March revelation or the New Testament revision came first is uncertain. Joseph Smith revised 1 Corinthians 15 sometime between 16 February and early March 1832. See Kent P. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021), 5. Because 1 Corinthians 15 comes about three-quarters of the way through the text revised during this roughly three-week period, I have placed its revision in early March.
31. “New Testament Revision 2,” p. 129–30 (second numbering), The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision-2/197; compare with “Bible Used for Bible Revision,” p. 699, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/bible-used-for-bible-revision/821.
32. “Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126],” p. 34–36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/2. The revelation also used the term *celestial spirit* and connected that term with the righteous who will inherit the celestialized earth.
33. “Letter to the Church, circa February 1834,” p. 135, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-circa-february-1834/1. See also the entry for this document in appendix 1.
34. Michael MacKay and Daniel Belnap, “The Pure Language Project,” *Journal of Mormon History* 49, no. 4 (2023): 2, 20–21, 26–32; the “Sample of Pure Language” document is also relevant, 8–10. See also notes 105–8 in appendix 1.

35. "Letter to Church Leaders in Geneseo, New York, 23 November 1833," p. [3], The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-geneseo-new-york-23-november-1833/3.
36. See "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]," p. 762, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838/216.
37. "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 192, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/198.
38. "Poem to William W. Phelps, between circa 1 and circa 15 February 1843," p. 85, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/poem-to-william-w-phelps-between-circa-1-and-circa-15-february-1843/4; cf. pages 82–85.
39. The unfolding understanding of eternal marriage is also an important context for this instruction. See Lotze, "Joseph Smith's Vision of the Celestial Kingdom," 56–58; Historical introduction, "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/1#historical-intro.
40. See historical introduction, "Instruction, 16 May 1843," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/1#historical-intro.
41. On the everlasting covenant being connected with the celestial glory, see "Letter to Church Brethren, 15 June 1835," p. 1n3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-brethren-15-june-1835/1. Further, the term "new and everlasting covenant" would, two months after this May 1843 instruction, be clearly connected with celestial kingdom concepts. See "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," p. 1–3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/1.
42. The 1832 vision spoke of priesthood ordinances and authority only in context of the celestial glory (for example, baptism, laying on of hands, "him who is ordained and sealed unto this power"). Thus, *priesthood* here is best understood with that association.
43. "Instruction, 16 May 1843," p. 14–16, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/2.
44. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees?" 132. These instances were in August 1859, January 1873, and May 1875. See appendix 2 for citations.
45. See "History of Joseph Smith," *Deseret News* 6, no. 29 (24 September 1856): 225, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2573957. This was a series publishing the Manuscript History of the Church. The instruction had been inscribed into the Manuscript History probably in late 1854 or early 1855 with very minor alterations (such as punctuation). See "History Draft [1 March–31 December 1843]," p. 31, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-draft-1-march-31-december-1843/42; "History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843]," p. 1551, The

- Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/194.
46. "A Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 9, no. 2 (15 January 1847): 23, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6cb8c607-ac4c-4869-b5c9-57cfa52acf5/0/6. The article was unsigned, but Orson Hyde was the editor of this issue (see p. 32) and is thus typically attributed as the author. For example, see Jonathan A. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 63.
 47. "Minutes of the General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 16, no. 28 (15 July 1854): 437–38, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101076460078&seq=453.
 48. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:271–72 (8 March 1857), content dm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/488/rec/5. The quoted text is very similar to the report in Wilford Woodruff's journal entry for 8 March 1857. See "Journal (January 1, 1854–December 31, 1859)," March 7, 1857–March 10, 1857, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/58IK.
 49. For sermons included in the *Journal of Discourses* that were recorded and reported by George Watt, "the precise wording and exact examples and phrases used by the speaker cannot be relied upon with any degree of certainty." Gerrit Dirkmaat and LaJean Purcell Carruth, "The Prophets Have Spoken, but What Did They Say? Examining the Differences between George D. Watt's Original Shorthand Notes and the Sermons Published in the *Journal of Discourses*," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2015): 28, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-prophets-have-spoken-but-what-did-they-say-examining-the-differences-between-george-d-watts-original-shorthand-notes-and-the-sermons-published-in-the-journal-of-discourses.
 50. "Brigham Young, 1859 April 7," p. 4–5, in "Church History Department Pitman Shorthand transcriptions, 2013–2025," Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter, "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions"), catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/093e861b-f5af-4d04-aa21-c4bdcd2bc4c6/0/0; bracketed material in original transcription, except for [sic]. A brief summary of his address is in "Minutes of the Annual Conference," *Deseret News* 9, no. 6 (13 April 1859): 41, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2590746.
 51. Brigham may have been reminded of Joseph's instruction when Brigham reviewed the instruction in the Manuscript History of the Church prior to its publication (see note 45). See "Introduction to History, 1838–1856 (Manuscript History of the Church)," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/intro/introduction-to-history-1838-1856-manuscript-history-of-the-church; Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4: 439–73, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-writing-of-joseph-smiths-history.
 52. See "Tabernacle," *Deseret News* 9, no. 10 (11 May 1859): 80, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2588246. A transcription of Pratt's discourse does not seem to be extant.
 53. "Orson Hyde, 1859 May 15," p. 7–8, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,"

- catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e686c84d-a52e-4330-bdb6-91a76d340f7b/0/0. See Matthew 13:3–8, 18–23. An abbreviated summary of Hyde's discourse is "Tabernacle," *Deseret News* 9, no. 11 (18 May 1859): 88, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2588302. Recently, Jim Hansen made the same connection between the parable of the sower and the degrees in the celestial kingdom. See Hansen, "Degrees of Glory," 102.
54. "Brigham Young (Lehi), 1867 August 27," p. 3, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a16cd766-15e9-4f29-991f-ee14653dd211/0/0.
 55. *Journal of Discourses*, 15:319 (19 January 1873), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/5592/rec/16.
 56. See The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Doctrine and Covenants," Church History Topics, Gospel Library, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/doctrine-covenants.
 57. The sermon was Joseph E. Taylor, "The Resurrection," *The Deseret Weekly* 38, no. 1 (29 December 1888): 26, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2675585. The sermon was delivered in June and printed in December. For Taylor's position, see "Patriarch Taylor is Called Beyond," *Deseret Evening News*, 18 February 1913, p. 1, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=24995832.
 58. B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Company, 1893), 426, archive.org/details/outlinesofeccles00brobe/page/426/mode/2up. This book was published for almost a century, with the last "official" edition being published in 1979. See entry in WorldCat for OCLC number 4775934.
 59. In *Journal of Discourses*, 24:161 (24 June 1883), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/8599/rec/25.
 60. For a current example of being referenced, see "Articles of Faith 1:1–4" and "Articles of Faith 1:5–13" in *The Pearl of Great Price Student Manual, Religion 327* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2017), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/the-articles-of-faith/articles-of-faith-1-1-4.
 61. See preface to James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), archive.org/details/articlesfaithas00talmgoog/page/n10/mode/2up. Further, Talmage had preached the principle of multiple degrees within the three kingdoms six years earlier. See "Church Theology Class," *The Deseret Weekly* 47, no. 22 (18 November 1893): 688, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2740078.
 62. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 420.
 63. The only changes were minor editing updates. The next paragraph in the book—a discussion about advancement between the telesial, terrestrial, and celestial kingdoms—had significant changes between the first edition and later editions. See Ben Spackman, "James E. Talmage, the Articles of Faith, and Progression between Kingdoms: New Light," Ben Spackman (blog), 17 August

- 2021, benspackman.com/2021/08/james-e-talmage-the-articles-of-faith-and-progression-between-kingdoms/.
64. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 99, archive.org/details/TalmageTheHouseOfTheLord/page/n113/mode/2up. See also James E. Talmage, “The Philosophical Basis of ‘Mormonism,’” *Improvement Era* 18, no. 11 (September 1915): 956, archive.org/details/improvementera18011unse/page/956/mode/2up.
 65. Orson F. Whitney, *Gospel Themes: A Treatise on Salient Features of “MORMONISM”* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1914), 44, archive.org/details/gospelthemestre00whit/page/44/mode/2up.
 66. Melvin J. Ballard, *Discourse: Three Degrees of Glory* (Mount Ogden Stake Genealogical Committee, 1922), 10–11, archive.org/details/threedegreesof-gl00ballrich/page/10/mode/2up. The citation to Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 came a few paragraphs after the text quoted here. See also Melvin J. Ballard, “The Purpose of Life,” *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 83, no. 1 (7 January 1926): 7; no. 2 (14 January 1926): 18, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243263&seq=19.
 67. Flynn, “Three sub-degrees?,” 137–38. The manual was *The Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324–25* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 325, churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/32493_eng.pdf. The conference addresses were by Milton R. Hunter in 1949 and 1969 and Royden G. Derrick in 1989 (see appendix 2).
 68. See Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory”; Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, November 2008, 92–94, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2008/10/celestial-marriage.
 69. “Kingdoms of Glory,” Topics and Questions. See also *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324–325* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 765, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual-2017/chapter-51-doctrine-and-covenants-131-132-1-33.
 70. Flynn, “Three sub-degrees?,” 139.
 71. See also “Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76],” p. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/8.
 72. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:22. For a similar statement by Joseph Fielding’s father, see Joseph F. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:12 (7 December 1879), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/7900.
 73. *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324–325* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 403, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual-2017/chapter-28-doctrine-and-covenants-76-50-119. For a similar reference in a much earlier Church manual, see *Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Associations Manual, 1901–1902, Subject: Principles of the Gospel, Part 1* (Salt Lake

City: Deseret News, 1901), 52, archive.org/details/principlesofgosp00unse/page/52/mode/2up.

74. Charles W. Penrose, *Conference Report*, April 1922, 30–31, emphasis added, archive.org/details/conferencereport1922a/page/30/mode/2up
75. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:139 (28 Jul 1861). Other statements by Brigham seem to indicate he believed there were more than just the three general kingdoms of glory. See *Journal of Discourses*, 6:347 (31 July 1859); 8:35 (6 Apr 1860); 8:154 (26 Aug 1860); "Brigham Young, 1864 April 10," p. 13, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/1b05b8ac-235b-424e-b973-2cffdc7f5183/0/0. See also "Discourse, 30 January 1842," p. [4], The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-30-january-1842/2.
76. John A. Widtsoe, "Evidences and Reconciliations: cxxi. How May Membership and Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom Be Won?" *Improvement Era* 51, no. 3 (March 1948): 161, archive.org/details/improvementera5103unse/page/160/mode/2up. See also the 1955 Sunday School manual: William E. Berrett, *Teachings of The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School General Board, [1955]), 74–75, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7d491752-b10a-4498-a4bf-f8280498c56a/0/81.
77. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 420, emphasis added. See also Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, 99; James E. Talmage, "The Philosophical Basis of 'Mormonism,'" *Improvement Era* 18, no. 11 (September 1915): 956, archive.org/details/improvementera18011unse/page/956/mode/2up.
78. Dallin H. Oaks, "Divine Love in the Father's Plan," *Liahona*, May 2022, 101–2, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2022/04/51oaks.
79. See D. Todd Christofferson, "The Love of God," *Liahona*, November 2021, 16–18, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2021/10/15christofferson.
80. Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory," 26.
81. Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory," 27, emphasis added.
82. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 418, emphasis added, online at churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-36.
83. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated,

For various reasons, marriage and children are not immediately available to all. Perhaps no offer of marriage is forthcoming. Perhaps even after marriage there is an inability to have children. Or perhaps there is no present attraction to the opposite gender. Whatever the reason, God's richest blessings will eventually be available to all of His children if they are clean and faithful.

"Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 2007, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2007/10/helping-those-who-struggle-with-same-gender-attraction. See also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), 212, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual

/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-howard-w-hunter/chapter-16-marriage-an-eternal-partnership.

84. See Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory”; “Divine Love in the Father’s Plan.”
85. *Celestial*, even when used by others in The Joseph Smith Papers, usually referred to the highest degree of glory. For example, in a letter to the Saints, Orson Hyde used “celestial tears” (coming from seraphs around the throne of God), “celestial radiance” (coming from the sun), and “celestial strength” (coming from God). See Orson Hyde, in “*Times and Seasons*, 1 June 1842,” p. 805, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-1-june-1842/7](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-1-june-1842/7); “*Times and Seasons*, 15 July 1842,” p. 847, 849, 852, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-15-july-1842/1](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-15-july-1842/1). As one counterexample, “his Celestial Majesty” was used in reference to the emperor of China. See “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842],” p. 1225, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/397](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/397).
86. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 200–1.
87. “Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76],” p. 1–10, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1)
88. “Revelation, 1 March 1832 [D&C 78],” p. 1–2, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-march-1832-dc-78/1](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-march-1832-dc-78/1).
89. “New Testament Revision 2,” p. 129–30 (second numbering), The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision-2/197](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision-2/197); compare with “Bible Used for Bible Revision,” p. 699, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/bible-used-for-bible-revision/821](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/bible-used-for-bible-revision/821). On the date of the revision, see note 30.
90. “Bible Used for Bible Revision,” p. 699, The Joseph Smith Papers.
91. “New Testament Revision 2,” p. 129–30 (second numbering), The Joseph Smith Papers.
92. “Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126],” p. 34, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/2](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/2).
93. “Letter to Noah C. Saxton, 4 January 1833,” p. 16–17, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-noah-c-saxton-4-january-1833/3](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-noah-c-saxton-4-january-1833/3).
94. “Letter to Edward Partridge, 5 December 1833,” p. 69, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-5-december-1833/5](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-5-december-1833/5).
95. The Lord had defined His rest as “the fulness of his glory.” “Revelation, 22–23 September 1832 [D&C 84],” p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-22-23-september-1832-dc-84/1](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-22-23-september-1832-dc-84/1).
96. “Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 10 December 1833,” p. 71, The Joseph Smith Papers, [josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-others-10-december-1833/2](https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-others-10-december-1833/2).

97. "Revelation, 16–17 December 1833 [D&C 101]," p. 79, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-16-17-december-1833-dc-101/7.
98. "Letter to the Church, circa February 1834," p. 135–36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-circa-february-1834/1.
99. "Letter to the Church, circa March 1834," p. 142–43, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-circa-march-1834/1. This is a continuation of the February 1834 letter.
100. "Revelation, 22 June 1834 [D&C 105]," p. 199, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-22-june-1834-dc-105/1.
101. "Ordination and Blessing of Oliver Cowdery, 5 December 1834," p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/ordination-and-blessing-of-oliver-cowdery-5-december-1834/1.
102. "Blessing to Willard Snow, 1 March 1835," p. 175, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/blessing-to-willard-snow-1-march-1835/1.
103. This may have been a reference to the state of paradise between death and the resurrection. Even if that is the case, this is still connected to the celestial glory of the 1832 vision. See note 136.
104. "Comparison of Characters," The Joseph Smith Papers. All bracketed text is from the JSP. For an explanation of the documents, including the bracketed numbers, see "Introduction to Egyptian Alphabet Documents, circa Early July–circa November 1835," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/introduction-to-egyptian-alphabet-documents-circa-early-july-circa-november-1835/1. Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and W. W. Phelps each wrote an alphabet. Joseph's text is featured here (Cowdery's text was nearly identical), with the alternate text by Phelps.
105. "Comparison of Characters." See also MacKay and Belnap, "The Pure Language Project," 30–31. This document was created by William W. Phelps and Warren Parrish. "It is not known whether Joseph Smith directed the production of this volume or whether Joseph Smith or others besides Phelps and Parrish were involved with the project, but it is almost certain that Joseph Smith at least knew and approved of the work Phelps and Parrish were doing," so this example is included here as a Joseph Smith document. Historical introduction, "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language, circa July–circa November 1835," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/grammar-and-alphabet-of-the-egyptian-language-circa-july-circa-november-1835/93#historical-intro.
106. See MacKay and Belnap, "The Pure Language Project," 32.
107. That *celestial* is here referring to the celestial kingdom (and is not a synonym for the generic *heaven*) is clearly indicated by Kolob being *near* the celestial, not *in* the celestial. See also MacKay and Belnap, "The Pure Language Project," 30–31. Further, the astronomy depicted in the Book of Abraham is very similar to the celestial hierarchy described in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, in which

there are eight levels or firmaments. God and his throne are in the eighth firmament, while the stars are in the fifth, thus clearly distinguishing God's residence from the rest of the heavens. See John Gee, William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, "And I Saw the Stars: The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, BYU, 2005), 9.

108. It was later revealed that "Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the Revolutions thereof, that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest; this is the reckoning of the Lord's time." "Book of Abraham and Facsimiles, 1 March–16 May 1842," p. 719, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-abraham-and-facsimiles-1-march-16-may-1842/5. This correlates with Joseph Smith's teaching that God's time is according to the planet on which He resides; see "Instruction, 2 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton [D&C 130]," p. 68, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-2-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-dc-130/3.
109. "Prayer, 23 October 1835," p. 51, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/prayer-23-october-1835/2.
110. "Discourse, 12 November 1835," p. 34, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-november-1835/5.
111. This is connected with the earth becoming both celestialized and the dwelling-place of those who receive the celestial kingdom. See the 5 January 1841 Discourse in table 1.
112. "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 61, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/62.
113. "Visions, 21 January 1836 [D&C 137]," p. 136–38, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-21-january-1836-dc-137/1.
114. "Discourse, 5 January 1841, as Reported by Unidentified Scribe," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-5-january-1841-as-reported-by-unidentified-scribe/1.
115. "Letter to Oliver Granger, 26 January 1841," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-granger-26-january-1841/2.
116. "Journal, December 1841–December 1842," p. 57, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/12. "While nothing explicitly identifies [this] statement as Joseph Smith's, its content and tone suggest that it, or its main ideas, originated with him rather than with Willard Richards," the scribe. "Journal, December 1841–December 1842," p. 57, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/12n50.
117. "Discourse, 30 January 1842," p. 3–4, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-30-january-1842/1.

118. "Book of Abraham Excerpt and Facsimile 2, 15 March 1842 [Abraham 2:19–5:21]," p. 0, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-abraham-excerpt-and-facsimile-2-15-march-1842-abraham-219-521/5; see also "Explanation of Facsimile 2, circa 15 March 1842," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/explanation-of-facsimile-2-circa-15-march-1842/1.
119. See notes 107 and 108.
120. "Discourse, 20 March 1842, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," p. 136, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-20-march-1842-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/3.
121. "Poem to William W. Phelps, between circa 1 and circa 15 February 1843," p. 84, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/poem-to-william-w-phelps-between-circa-1-and-circa-15-february-1843/3. This is a re-rendering of the text of the 1832 vision.
122. "Letter to James Arlington Bennet, 17–18 March 1843," p. 2–3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-james-arlington-bennet-17-18-march-1843/2.
123. Alluding to "overcome all things" from the 1832 vision.
124. "Blessing to Joseph Kingsbury, 23 March 1843," p. 14–15, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/blessing-to-joseph-kingsbury-23-march-1843/1.
125. "Instruction, 2 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton [D&C 130]," p. 69–70, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-2-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-dc-130/4.
126. The wording here indicates that *celestial kingdom* is one of many kingdoms and thus cannot be a reference to the generic *heaven*.
127. "Discourse, 14 May 1843," p. 32, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-14-may-1843/3.
128. "Instruction, 16 May 1843," p. 14–15, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/2.
129. "Remarks, 25 November 1843," p. 166, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/remarks-25-november-1843/1.
130. The wording here indicates that *celestial kingdom* is one of many kingdoms and thus cannot be a reference to the generic *heaven*.
131. "Discourse, 21 January 1844," p. 183, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-21-january-1844/3.
132. "Discourse, 10 March 1844, as Reported by Franklin D. Richards," p. 33–34, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-10-march-1844-as-reported-by-franklin-d-richards/2.
133. Those who would inherit the telestial glory were described as "they who are thrust down to hell these are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection." "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 7, The Joseph

Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/7.

134. "Blessing to John and Catharine Paine Wilkie, 15 March 1844," p. 449, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/blessing-to-john-and-catharine-paine-wilkie-15-march-1844/1.
135. "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," p. 139, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/7.
136. This instance of *celestial kingdom* does not directly refer to the celestial glory of the 1832 vision but rather the state of paradise between death and the resurrection. In the Book of Mormon, Alma had taught that when people die, their spirits, "whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life." Those who were righteous go to paradise (and those who were wicked to outer darkness) to await the resurrection. See "Book of Mormon, 1830," p. 334–35, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-mormon-1830/340. Still, *celestial kingdom* here is clearly connected with the final celestial glory because this "intermediate" paradise or celestial kingdom is the waiting place for those who will receive the final celestial kingdom, as indicated by the subsequent allusions. As support for this understanding, in an 1846 article, Orson Pratt described the spirit world as being divided into four groups corresponding to the four groups in the 1832 vision:
 1. Disembodied spirits in celestial paradise or place of happiness.
 2. Disembodied spirits in terrestrial paradise or prison.
 3. Disembodied spirits in telestial paradise or outer darkness.
 4. Disembodied spirits of the sons of perdition, the most degraded of all.

"Mormon Philosophy," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 7, no. 2 (15 January 1846): 30, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/1402/rec/7.
137. "In the morn" was a reference to "in the morn of the resurrection," which applied to those who were faithful (or the resurrection of the just). See "Discourse, 16 April 1843, as Reported by Willard Richards," p. 140, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16-april-1843-as-reported-by-willard-richards/2.
138. "Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/2.
139. In the record of the 1832 vision, ordinances were only ever mentioned in connection with the celestial glory.
140. In 1836, Joseph Smith learned "that all children who die before they arive to the years of accountability, are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven." "Visions, 21 January 1836 [D&C 137]," p. 137, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-21-january-1836-dc-137/2.
141. See "Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," p. 2, The Joseph

Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/2.

142. For the timing of the alterations, see historical introduction, "Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/1#historical-intro, especially footnote 12. For the altered text, see "History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844]," p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/25.
143. See "History of Joseph Smith," *Deseret News* 7, no. 23 (12 August 1857): 178, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2576260.
144. See "Introduction to History, 1838–1856 (Manuscript History of the Church)," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/intro/introduction-to-history-1838-1856-manuscript-history-of-the-church; Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4: 439–73, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-writing-of-joseph-smiths-history.
145. That this refers to multiple degrees within the celestial kingdom is implied by the second part of the statement—that there are other mansions for those not living in the celestial kingdom (referencing, presumably, the terrestrial and testial kingdoms). This is in contrast to the teaching that individuals in the celestial kingdom inherit kingdoms, as in Orson Pratt, "Equality of dominion we cannot understand, by supposing each person that comes into the celestial glory is going to have the same number of worlds, and of kingdoms, and thrones set off to him that those have who have been in the celestial glory millions of ages," in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:103, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/7948/rec/3. See also the comment by Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook in the paragraph after the table.
146. "12 May 1844 (Sunday Morning). Temple Stand," *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1980), 403n24 (cf. 367–68), rsc.byu.edu/words-joseph-smith/12-may-1844-sunday-morning-temple-stand.
147. "A Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 9, no. 2 (15 January 1847): 23, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6cb8c607-ac4c-4869-b5c9-57cfa52acf5/0/6. Orson Hyde was the editor of this issue (see p. 32).
148. In "Minutes," *Deseret News* 4, no. 11 (13 April 1854): 42, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2580223.
149. *Journal of Discourses*, 4:271–272 (8 March 1857), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/488/rec/5. The quoted text is very similar to the report in Wilford Woodruff's journal entry for 8 March 1857. See "Journal (January 1, 1854 – December 31, 1859)," March 7, 1857 - March 10, 1857, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/581K.
150. "Brigham Young, 1859 April 7," p. 4–5, "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/093e861b-f5af-4d04-aa21-c4bdcd2bc4c6/0/0.

151. See discussion of this earlier in the article, including citations in notes 52 and 53.
152. “Orson Hyde, 1859 May 15,” p. 7–8, in “Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,” catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e686c84d-a52e-4330-bdb6-91a76d340f7b/0/0. An abbreviated summary of Hyde’s discourse is “Tabernacle,” *Deseret News* 9, no. 11 (18 May 1859).
153. “Orson Pratt, 1859 August 28,” p. 35, in “Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,” catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/bd7d8a5e-fc65-4ada-89e6-b669ae9afe2b/0/0; compare with *Journal of Discourses*, 7:89, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/3055/rec/8.
154. “Brigham Young (Lehi), 1867 August 27,” p. 3, in “Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,” catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a16cd766-15e9-4f29-991f-ee14653dd211/0/0.
155. *Journal of Discourses*, 13:186, 187 (7 Oct 1869), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/4957/rec/14. Pratt is likely echoing what Young taught ten years earlier: “We see the world of mankind before us they have the ability to propagate their progeny if you and I are exalted into the celestial kingdom of our Father and God we have no less ability there than we have here.” “Brigham Young (two sermons), 1859 October 6,” p. 11, in “Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,” catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/77f76f61-d243-4753-afc1-0aa9eb11aeeb/0/0.
156. *Journal of Discourses*, 15:318–19, 322 (19 January 1873), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/5593/rec/16.
157. “Orson Pratt, 1875 May 30,” p. 49–51, in “Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,” catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9176e7d9-3168-431f-b765-f58f87080da1/0/0
158. *Journal of Discourses*, 24:161 (24 June 1883), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/8599/rec/25.
159. “Minutes of the Nottingham Conference,” *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 80, no. 47 (21 November 1918): 749–50, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243156&seq=761
160. Ballard, *Discourse: Three Degrees of Glory*, 10–11.
161. Ballard, “The Purpose of Life,” 18.
162. B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Company, 1893), 426, archive.org/details/outlinesofeccles00brobe/page/426/mode/2up. Similar wording to his 1893 book, but omitting the sentence about the three heavens (and the citation to Doctrine and Covenants 131), is printed in his *A New Witness for God* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1895), 390–91, archive.org/details/newwitnessforgod1895robe/page/390/mode/2up.
163. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 420.
164. *Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Associations Manual, 1901–1902*, 52, 57.
165. Joseph B. Keeler, *The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government, Also a Concordance of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City:

Deseret News, 1904), 169–70, archive.org/details/keeler/page/n185/mode/2up. The book included a brief concordance of verses in the Doctrine and Covenants. The entry on celestial listed four scriptures: 76:70 (about the celestial glory), 88:22, 25 (about abiding a celestial law and glory, and the earth abiding the celestial law), and 131:1 (in the celestial glory there are three heavens).

166. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, 99.

167. Orson F. Whitney, *Gospel Themes: A Treatise on Salient Features of "MORMONISM,"* 44.

168. The January 1922 issue had a lesson about "the destiny of the unmarried," which stated: "The modern prophet Joseph Smith taught that no woman could enter the celestial kingdom without having been sealed to some man; but neither can a man enter there without his wife." An erratum to this lesson was published in the May issue, italics in original:

Our attention is called to an error in Lesson XIV, "The Destiny of the Unmarried," paragraph one, page 57. It should read: The modern prophet, Joseph Smith, taught that no woman can enter into her *exaltation* in the Celestial Kingdom without having been sealed to some man; but neither can a man be *exalted* without his wife.

No indication is given of who noted the erratum, but the change indicates there was a desire to clarify the difference between entering the celestial kingdom and receiving exaltation in that kingdom. "Lesson XIV. The Destiny of the Unmarried," in "An Everlasting Covenant. Lessons on Marriage and Family Life. Senior Course of Study," *The Young Woman's Journal* 33, no. 1 (January 1922): 51, 56–57, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/20493; "Erratum," in "M. I. A. Notes," *The Young Woman's Journal* 33, no. 5 (May 1922): 301, italics in original, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/27158. The error in the original was reprinted in the January 1928 issue. See "Lesson XIV. The Destiny of the Unmarried," in "An Everlasting Covenant. Lessons on Marriage and Family Life. Senior Course of Study," *The Young Woman's Journal* 39, no. 1 (January 1928): 64, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/25770/rec/41.

169. *Modern Revelation As Contained in The Book of Doctrine and Covenants: A Study Course for the Mutual Improvement Associations in the British Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for the Year 1930–1931* (Liverpool, GB: Latter-day Saints, European Mission, British Mission, 1930), 63.

170. "Gospel Doctrine Sunday School Lessons" (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, n.d.), 119, compiled in *Sunday School Lessons 1933, Vol. 6*, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d4d0166d-414e-48ce-96d2-c9287a1099d3/0/638.

171. *Gospel Doctrine Sunday School Lessons for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1940), 117.

172. William Edwina Berrett, *Doctrines of the Restored Church: A Brief Treatment of the History, Beliefs, Doctrines and Literature of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Department of Education of the Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1941), 212. The content was merged in 1944 into the Church history book *The Restored Church*, which was used “for decades [as] the approved text for the seminary course taken by high school seniors.” “Chapter One: By Small and Simple Things, 1912–1935,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: One Hundred Years of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/by-study-and-also-by-faith/chapter-one-by-small-and-simple-things-1912-1935 (which incorrectly dated the book to 1943). See also “Acknowledgement—Fourth Edition,” introductory matter in William Edwin Bennett, *The Restored Church: A Brief History of the Growth and Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1944). This quote appeared identically in that book (p. 605).

173. John A. Widtsoe, “Evidences and Reconciliations: lvii. Are All Exalted Who Enter the Celestial Glory?” *Improvement Era* 45, no. 10 (October 1942): 641, 671, archive.org/details/improvementera4510unse/page/640/mode/2up.
174. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation: Being a Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums For the Year 1948* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, n.d.), 58.
175. John A. Widtsoe, “Evidences and Reconciliations: cxxi. How May Membership and Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom Be Won?” *Improvement Era* 51, no. 3 (March 1948): 161, 189, 191, archive.org/details/improvementera5103unse/page/160/mode/2up.
176. William Edwin Berrett, *Teachings of The Doctrine and Covenants, Second Printing* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School General Board, 1955), 76, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7d491752-b10a-4498-a4bf-f8280498c56a/0/83
177. George F. Richards, Conference Report, October 1940, 51, archive.org/details/conferencereport1940sa/page/50/mode/2up
178. Milton R. Hunter, Conference Report, April 1949, 71, archive.org/details/conferencereport1949a/page/70/mode/2up.
179. Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, October 1950, 15, archive.org/details/conferencereport1950sa/page/14/mode/2up.
180. Bruce R. McConkie Conference Report, April 1957, 19, archive.org/details/conferencereport1957a/page/18/mode/2up.
181. Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, April 1957, 22, archive.org/details/conferencereport1957a/page/22/mode/2up.
182. George Q. Morris, Conference Report, October 1959, 48–49, archive.org/details/conferencereport1959sa/page/48/mode/2up. In his discussion of celestial marriage, Elder Morris states that those who reject it are shut out of God’s glory. In context of the address, this seems to be different than being shut out of God’s presence.
183. Delbert L. Stapley, Conference Report, April 1961, 66, archive.org/details/conferencereport1961a/page/66/mode/2up.

184. David O. McKay, Conference Report, April 1964, 45, archive.org/details/conferencereport1964a/page/44/mode/2up.
185. Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, October 1964, 27–28, archive.org/details/conferencereport1964sa/page/28/mode/2up.
186. Milton R. Hunter, Conference Report, October 1969, 79, archive.org/details/conferencereport1969sa/page/78/mode/2up.
187. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church," *Ensign*, November 1988, 96–97, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1988/10/to-the-single-adult-sisters-of-the-church](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1988/10/to-the-single-adult-sisters-of-the-church).
188. Royden G. Derrick, "The Way to Perfection," *Ensign*, May 1989, 76–77, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1989/04/the-way-to-perfection](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1989/04/the-way-to-perfection)
189. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign*, November 1991, 97–100, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1991/10/daughters-of-god](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1991/10/daughters-of-god). I counted President Hinckley as an Apostle in my tally in the section "Elder Ballard's discourse."
190. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees?", 133, 137–138.
191. Joseph E. Taylor, "The Resurrection," *The Deseret Weekly* 38, no. 1 (29 December 1888): 26, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2675585. The sermon was delivered in June and printed in December.
192. "What the Dead May Attain," *The Deseret Weekly* 47, no. 4 (15 July 1893): 105, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2740961. The editorial answer didn't indicate any problem with Peterson's assumption about degrees in the celestial kingdom. The answer focused on what it means for someone to receive the gospel in the flesh versus the spirit world, for receiving the celestial versus terrestrial glory.
193. "Answers to Questions: Relating to Degrees of Glory," *Improvement Era* 5, no. 5 (March 1902): 390–93, archive.org/details/improvementera0505unse/page/390/mode/2up. At the end of his discussion, Nicholson stated there are "two classes within the celestial degree," meaning married in the highest degree versus single in the lower two degrees.
194. "Editorial: Doctrine of Marriage," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 65, no. 34 (20 August 1903): 538, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073242968&seq=550. Apostle Francis M. Lyman was the editor of the paper, but he was away when this issue was published, so I cannot say for certain that he wrote this editorial.
195. W. A. M. [William A. Morton], "To Him That Overcometh," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 71, no. 3 (21 January 1909): 33, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073242919&seq=43
196. S. N. L., "Thy Brother Shall Rise Again," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 73, no. 24 (15 June 1911): 379–80, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243057&seq=389. For the writer, see the *Millennial Star*, 73, no. 25 (22 June 1911), 396, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243057&seq=406.
197. In a June 1907 statement, the Christian ministers included a quote from a

Church manual about the celestial glory, including a description about “the highest degree of this glory.” See “A Review of the ‘Address to the World’ Issued in Defence of the Mormon Church,” *Salt Lake Tribune* 75, no. 51 (4 June 1907): 7, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=13918518; reprinted in B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints, Volume II* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 274, 276, archive.org/details/defenseoffaithsa02robe/page/274/mode/2up.

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