

*Teachings Concerning
The Telestial Glory*

D&C 76

81 And again, we saw the glory of the telestial, which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon in the firmament.

82 These are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus.

83 These are they who deny not the Holy Spirit.

84 These are they who are thrust down to hell.

85 These are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work.

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

87 And the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial.

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

89 And thus we saw, in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding;

90 And no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it.

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

99 For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas.

100 These are they who say they are some of one and some of another--some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch;

101 But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the

everlasting covenant.

102 Last of all, these all are they who will not be gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud.

103 These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.

104 These are they who suffer the wrath of God on earth.

105 These are they who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

106 These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, until the fulness of times, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work;

107 When he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

108 Then shall he be crowned with the crown of his glory, to sit on the throne of his power to reign forever and ever.

109 But behold, and lo, we saw the glory and the inhabitants of the telestial world, that they were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore;

110 And heard the voice of the Lord saying: These all shall bow the knee, and every tongue shall confess to him who sits upon the throne forever and ever;

111 For they shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared;

112 And they shall be servants of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end.

From The Poetic Version

Joseph Smith

58. Again I beheld the telestial, as third,
The lesser, or starry world, next in its place,
For the leaven must leaven three measures of meal,
And very knee bow that is subject to grace.

59. These are they that receiv'd not the gospel of
Christ,
Or evidence, either, that he ever was;
As the stars are all diff'rent in glory and light,
So differs the glory of these by the laws.

60. These are they that deny not the spirit of
God,
But are thrust down to hell, with the devil, for sins,
As hypocrites, liars, whoremongers, and thieves,
And stay 'till the last resurrection begins.

61. 'Till the Lamb shall have finish'd the work
he begun;
Shall have trodden the wine press, in fury alone,
And overcome all by the pow'r of his might:
He conquers to conquer, and save all his own.

62. These are they that receive not a fulness of
light,
From Christ, in eternity's world, where they are,
The terrestrial sends them the Comforter, though;
And minist'ring angels, to happify there.

63. And so the telestial 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.

64. And thus I beheld, in the vision of heav'n,
The telestial glory, dominion and bliss,
Surpassing the great understanding of men, --
Unknown, save reveal'd, in a world vain as this.

69. As the stars are all different in lustre and
size,
So the telestial region, is mingled in bliss;
From least unto greatest, and greatest to least,
The reward is exactly as promis'd in this.

70. These are they that came out for Apollos and
Paul;
For Cephas and Jesus, in all kinds of hope;
For Enoch and Moses, and Peter, and John;
For Luther and Calvin, and even the Pope.

71. For they never received the gospel of Christ,

Nor the prophetic spirit that came from the Lord;
Nor the covenant neither, which Jacob once had;
They went their own way, and they have their
reward.

72. By the order of God, last of all, these are
they,
That will not be gathered with saints here below,
To be caught up to Jesus, and meet in the cloud: --
In darkness they worshipp'd; to darkness they go.

73. These are they that are sinful, the wicked at
large,
That glutted their passion by meanness or worth;
All liars, adulterers, sorc'ers, and proud;
And suffer, as promis'd, God's wrath on the earth.

74. These are they that must suffer the
vengeance of hell,
'Till Christ shall have trodden all enemies down,
And perfected his work, in the fulness of times:
And is crown'd on his throne with his glorious
crown.

75. The vast multitude of the telestial world --
As the stars of the skies, or the sands of the sea; --
The voice of Jehovah echo'd far and wide,
Ev'ry tongue shall confess, and they all bow the
knee.

76. Ev'ry man shall be judg'd by the works of
his life,
And receive a reward in the mansions prepar'd;
For his judgments are just, and his works never end,
As his prophets and servants have always declar'd.
[*Times and Seasons* 4:82-85]

Telestial Salvation

Joseph Fielding Smith

Those who enter into the telestial kingdom,
where their glories differ as do the stars of heaven in
their magnitude, and who are innumerable as the
sands of the seashore, are the ungodly, the filthy
who suffer the wrath of God on the earth, who are
thrust down to hell where they will be required to
pay the uttermost farthing before their redemption
comes. These are they who receive not the gospel of
Christ and consequently could not deny the Holy
Spirit while living on the earth.

They have no part in the first resurrection and
are not redeemed from the devil and his angels until

the last resurrection, because of their wicked lives and their evil deeds. Nevertheless, even these are heirs of salvation, but before they are redeemed and enter into their kingdom, they must repent of their sins, and receive the gospel, and bow the knee, and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world.

In both the terrestrial and the telestial glories the inhabitants thereof will be limited in their powers, opportunities, and progression, because, like the sons of perdition, “they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received” (D&C 88:32). [*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:22]

Telestial for Those Who Live After the Manner of the World

Spencer W. Kimball

Those who have lived after the manner of the world shall go to a telestial kingdom whose glory is as the stars. (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p.48)

Joseph Fielding Smith

In passing it is only necessary to say, that in the telestial will go all those who have not been true; those who have professed and who have not performed (D.C. 41:1), the liars, sorcerers, adulterers, and all who refuse to walk in ways of truth. (*The Way to Perfection*, pp.205-206)

Liars, Adulterers, etc.

D&C 76:103

Joseph Fielding Smith

Into this kingdom will go all of those who have been unclean in their lives. See verses 98 to 112 in Section 76. These people who enter there will be the unclean; the liars, sorcerers, adulterers, and those who have broken their covenants. These people who enter there will be the unclean; the liars, sorcerers, adulterers, and those who have broken their covenants. Of these the Lord says: “These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, until the fulness of times, when

Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work” (D. & C. 76:106). Yet these, after they have been punished for their sins and having been turned over to the torments of Satan, shall eventually come forth, after the millennium, to receive the telestial kingdom.” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2: 209.)

Neal A. Maxwell

Selfishness is actually the detonator of all the cardinal sins. It is the hammer for the breaking of the Ten Commandments, whether by neglecting parents, the Sabbath, or by inducing false witness, murder, and envy. No wonder the selfish individual is often willing to break a covenant in order to fix an appetite. No wonder those who will later comprise the telestial kingdom, after they have paid a price, were once unrepentant adulterers, whoremongers, and those who both loved and made lies. (“Repent of [Our] Selfishness” (D&C 56:8),” *Ensign*, May 1999, p. 24)

Murderers Go to the Telestial Kingdom

Bruce R. McConkie

When the Lord paraphrases the language of Rev. 21:8 in latter-day revelation (D. & C. 63:17-18 and 76:103-106) he omits murderers from the list of evil persons. Their inclusion here by John, however, coupled with the fact that only those who deny the truth after receiving a perfect knowledge of it shall become sons of perdition, is a clear indication that murderers shall eventually go to the telestial kingdom, unless of course there are some among those destined to be sons of perdition who are also murderers.

(*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3: 585)

Who Are Thrust Down to Hell

D&C 76:84

Joseph Fielding Smith

- Those who enter into the telestial kingdom, where their glories differ as do the stars of

heaven in their magnitude, and who are innumerable as the sands of the seashore, are the ungodly, the filthy who suffer the wrath of God on the earth, who are thrust down to hell where they will be required to pay the uttermost farthing before their redemption comes. These are they who receive not the gospel of Christ and consequently could not deny the Holy Spirit while living on the earth. (*Doctrines of Salvation, 2:22*)

- All who have been filthy and who would not receive the truth and have not had the testimony of Jesus Christ, must suffer the torments of the damned until they are purged from their iniquity, for the blood of Jesus Christ will not cleanse them from their sins without their own individual suffering.

Nevertheless they shall come out of the prison eventually. These are the rest of the dead, spoken of by John, who do not live during the millennial reign, but afterwards; and these are assigned to a kingdom known as the telestial kingdom, and they are denied the privilege of dwelling with the Father and the Son, “worlds without end.” The Lord will do for them the best he can under the circumstances, but since they have denied his power and have dwelt in iniquity, they cannot receive the blessings of the kingdom of God. [*Doctrines of Salvation, 2:22-23*]

- These do not live during the millennial reign, but during that time are spending their time in torment, or anguish of soul, because of their transgressions. Christ has said that he suffered for all who will repent, but his wrath is kindled against all who will not repent, and they must suffer, “how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.”

This suffering will be a means of cleansing, or purifying, and through it the wicked shall be brought to a condition whereby they may,

through the redemption of Jesus Christ, obtain immortality. Their spirits and bodies shall be again united, and they shall dwell in the telestial kingdom. But this resurrection will not come until the end of the world. (*Doctrines of Salvation, 2:298*)

Glory of Telestial Kingdom Surpasses All Understanding

D&C 76:89

Bruce R. McConkie

That glory granted the inhabitants of the lowest kingdom of glory is called telestial glory. In the infinite mercy of a beneficent Father it surpasses all mortal understanding, and yet it is in no way comparable to the glory of the terrestrial and celestial worlds. Telestial glory is typified by the stars of the firmament, and “as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world” (D. & C. 76:81-112; 1 Cor. 15:41), meaning that all who inherit the telestial kingdom will not receive the same glory. (*Mormon Doctrine, p.778*)

John A. Widtsoe

These kingdoms, though very different, are filled with the children of God the Father. Though those of the lower kingdom have not shown themselves worthy of the fulness of salvation, yet the love of the Father envelops them. Even the glory of the lowest, the telestial, “surpasses all understanding.” (*Evidences and Reconciliations, p.199*)

Neal A. Maxwell

- Each post-resurrection kingdom is a kingdom of glory that is far better than this world we now know. Even “the glory of the telestial” will surpass “all understanding” (D&C 76:89). (*If Thou Endure It Well, p. 129*).
- God thus takes into merciful account not only our desires and our performance, but also the degrees of difficulty which our varied circumstances impose upon us. No wonder we will not complain at the final judgment, especially since even the telestial kingdom’s

glory “surpasses all understanding” (D&C 76:89). God delights in blessing us, especially when we realize “joy in that which [we] have desired” (D&C 7:8). [“According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 21]

Dallin H. Oaks

The lowest degree is the telestial domain of those who “received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets” (D&C 76:101) and who have had to suffer for their wickedness. But even this degree has a glory that “surpasses all understanding” (D&C 76:89). Its occupants receive the Holy Spirit and the administering of angels, for even those who have been wicked will ultimately be “heirs of [this degree of] salvation” (D&C 76:88). [“Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 86]

Several Kingdoms Within the Telestial

D&C 76:98

D&C 76:98

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

Poetic Version

69. As the stars are all different in lustre and size,
So the telestial region, is mingled in bliss;
From least unto greatest, and greatest to least,
The reward is exactly as promis'd in this.

Brigham Young

The glory of the telestial world no man knows, except he partakes of it; and yet, in that world they differ in glory as the stars in the firmament differ one from the other. The terrestrial glory is greater still, and the celestial is the greatest of all; that is the glory of God the Father, where our Lord Jesus Christ reigns. (*Journal of Discourses*, 6:293).

James E. Talmage

- The three kingdoms of widely differing glories are organized on an orderly plan of gradation.

We have seen that the telestial kingdom comprises several subdivisions; this also is the case, we are told, with the celestial; and, by analogy, we conclude that a similar condition prevails in the terrestrial. Thus the innumerable degrees of merit amongst mankind are provided for in an infinity of graded glories. (*The House of the Lord*, p.83)

- In the telestial world there are innumerable degrees comparable to the varying light of the stars. Yet all who receive of any one of these orders of glory are at last saved, and upon them Satan will finally have no claim. Even the telestial glory “surpasses all understanding; And no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it.” Then there are those who have lost all claim upon the immediate mercy of God, whose deeds have numbered them with Perdition and his angels. (*Articles of Faith*, Ch.4, p.92 - p.93)

For These Are They Who Are of Paul, and of Apollos

D&C 76:99-100

Joseph Smith

70. These are they that came out for Apollos and Paul;

For Cephas and Jesus, in all kinds of hope;
For Enoch and Moses, and Peter, and John;
For Luther and Calvin, and even the Pope.

71. For they never received the gospel of Christ,
Nor the prophetic spirit that came from the Lord;
Nor the covenant neither, which Jacob once had;
They went their own way, and they have their reward. [*Times and Seasons* 4:82-85]

Bruce R. McConkie

- Of those who suppose, in all sincerity, that they are following the course prescribed by Moses or any of the spiritual giants who went before, our revelation, identifying those who shall inherit the telestial kingdom, says: “These are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another -- some of Christ and some of

John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.” (D&C 66:99-101.) [*The Mortal Messiah*, Vol.1, FOOTNOTES, p.264]

- And those who believe in Christ and in such of his gospel as is taught in the churches of the world, and who themselves continue as a consequence to live after the manner of the world, shall go to a telestial kingdom. “For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas, the revealed word testifies. “These are they who say they are some of one and some of another -- some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; but [who] received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.” (D&C 76:98-101.) [*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p.24]
- Perfect unity is a goal the Church is still seeking. There are today Word of Wisdom faddists who will not use white flour or refined sugar; there are so-called liberals who think the problems of religion can be solved by dialogues and discussions without reference to revelation; there are others who maintain the Church should follow the world’s course of social progress; there are those who try and harmonize the evolutionary concepts of the day with the revealed account of the fall and atonement; and there are others who profess to believe that full salvation is reserved for those who practice plural marriage, and so on. In other words, there are some of one philosophy and some of another, some follow the advocates of this cultish view and some of that. How apt it is that the Lord chose to paraphrase Paul’s language concerning divisive groups in the Church, when he spoke of those who shall be thrust down to hell, and who after their sufferings shall come forth to receive a telestial inheritance. “These are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another -- some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and

some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol.2, p.313)

James E. Talmage

- We learn further that the inhabitants of this kingdom are to be graded among themselves, comprising as they do the unenlightened among the varied opposing sects and divisions of men, and sinners of many types, whose offenses are not those of utter perdition: “For as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; for these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another -- some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; but received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.” (*The House of the Lord*, p.82)
- The telestial state is for those who have failed to live according to the light given them; those who have had to suffer the results of their sins; those who have been of Moses, of Paul, of Apollos, and of any one of a multitude of others, but not of the Christ. (*The Story and Philosophy of “Mormonism”*, p.132)
- We learn further that the inhabitants of this kingdom are to be graded among themselves, comprising as they do the unenlightened among the varied opposing sects and divisions of men, and sinners of many types, whose offenses are not those of utter perdition: “For as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another -- some of Christ, and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the

everlasting covenant.” (*Articles of Faith*, pp.407 - 408)

Telestial Inhabitants as Innumerable as the Stars in Heaven

D&C 76:109

James E. Talmage

Evidently a considerable part of the human family will fail of all glory beyond that of the telestial kingdom, for we are told: “But behold, and lo, we saw the glory and the inhabitants of the telestial world, that they were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore.” They are thus not wholly rejected; their every merit will be respected. “For they shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared; And they shall be servants of the Most High, but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end.” (*Articles of Faith*, p. 408)

Every Knee Shall Bow and Tongue Confess

D&C 76:110

Joseph Fielding Smith

- I want to call attention to something that is stated frequently in the scriptures, and I think very often misunderstood, and that is the statement that, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess.” I wonder how many of us have an idea that if a knee bows and a tongue confesses, that is a sign of forgiveness of sin and freedom from sin, and that the candidate is prepared for exaltation? If you do, you make a mistake. It does not mean that at all.

The time will come when “every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess,” and yet the vast majority of mankind will go into the telestial kingdom eternally. Let me read these verses: “The time shall come when all shall see the salvation of the Lord; when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye

and shall confess before God that his judgments are just.”

It is a wonderful thing when men reach the stage when they will be willing to confess that the judgments against them are just, and they will bow the knee and will understand “eye to eye.” But see what this prophet says further: “And then shall the wicked be cast out, and they shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; and this because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not.” And yet they confess.

“For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.

“Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state” (Mosiah 16:1-4).

So do not get an idea that because they bow the knee and confess with the tongue, or as it reads in the other scriptures, see eye to eye, that this is going to exalt them in the celestial kingdom of God, because they are going to be judged according to their works and receive their dominion according to the plan that has been appointed and prepared according to the justice, and tempered by the mercy, of the Lord. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:30-31)

- The time will come when "every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God," that Jesus is the Christ,⁴ and all who are worthy of a place in any of the kingdoms of glory will have to learn to be obedient to the divine laws by which they will be governed. All who refuse will have to go with the devil and his angels into perdition. This group will be composed of those who have known the light and have had a testimony of the truth and who have sinned against the light beyond the power of repentance. (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:77)

Brigham Young

- I most assuredly expect that the time will come when every tongue shall confess, and every knee shall bow to the Savior, though the people may believe what they will with regard to religion. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.112)
- When all nations are so subdued to Jesus that every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess, there will still be millions on the earth who will not believe in him; but they will be obliged to acknowledge his kingly government. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.115)

Telestial Resurrection Comes at the End Millennium

D&C 76:85

D&C 88

100 And again, another trump shall sound, which is the third trump; and then come the spirits of men who are to be judged, and are found under condemnation;

101 And these are the rest of the dead; and they live not again until the thousand years are ended, neither again, until the end of the earth.

Joseph Fielding Smith

Will the earth go back to the telestial order after the millennium? No, but the people on the face of the earth, many of them, will be like the Nephites who lived 200 years after the coming of Christ. They will rebel against the Lord knowingly, and the great last struggle will come, and the devil and his forces will be defeated; then the earth will die and receive its resurrection and become a celestial body. The resurrection of the wicked will take place as one of the last events before the earth dies. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:87)

Bruce R. McConkie

When the Lord comes, those who died in him and who were true and faithful in the gospel cause, who took the Holy Spirit for their guide, and who were sanctified by obedience to celestial law -- all these shall rise from the grave with celestial bodies. These bodies qualify for celestial glory found only in

a celestial kingdom. They are Christ's, the firstfruits. Theirs is an inheritance of glory everlasting. After the Second Coming, those who lived a terrestrial law shall be called forth; their glory and kingdom shall be terrestrial. Then after the Millennium the residue of men, including those who lived a telestial law, will come forth. Those who have lived a telestial law shall gain telestial bodies and shall merit and gain a telestial glory found in a telestial kingdom. The sons of perdition, after their resurrection, will be cast out eternally with the devil and his angels. (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, pp. 651-652)

Suicide and the Telestial Kingdom

M. Russell Ballard

The act of taking one's life is truly a tragedy because this single act leaves so many victims: first the one who dies, then the dozens of others—family and friends—who are left behind, some to face years of deep pain and confusion. The living victims struggle, often desperately, with difficult emotions. In addition to the feelings of grief, anger, guilt, and rejection which the victims of such a family feel, Latter-day Saints carry an additional burden. The purpose of our mortal lives, we know, is to prove ourselves, to eventually return to live in the celestial kingdom. One who commits suicide closes the door on all that, some have thought, consigning himself to the telestial kingdom.

Or does he? What is the truth regarding suicide?

The prophets have taught us some important principles about suicide, but it is possible that many of us have misunderstood. Let's review some of the fundamental teachings of the prophets on this matter.

First, President George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency made a clear statement about the seriousness of suicide when he said: "Man did not create himself. He did not furnish his spirit with a human dwelling place. It is God who created man, both body and spirit. Man has no right, therefore, to destroy that which he had no agency in creating. They who do so are guilty of murder, self-murder it is true; but they are no more justified in killing themselves than they are in killing others. What

difference of punishment there is for the two crimes, I do not know; but it is clear that no one can destroy so precious a gift as that of life without incurring a severe penalty.” (*Gospel Truth*, 2 vols., Salt Lake City: Zion’s Book Store, 1957, 1:30; italics added.)

President Spencer W. Kimball made an equally strong statement in 1976. “It is a terrible criminal act for a person to go out and shorten his life by suicide,” he said. (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982, p. 187.)

Those statements on their own might seem to leave no room for hope. However, although they stress the seriousness of suicide, the statements do not mention the final destination of those who take their own lives.

The late Elder Bruce R. McConkie, formerly of the Quorum of the Twelve, expressed what many Church leaders have taught: “Suicide consists in the voluntary and intentional taking of one’s own life, particularly where the person involved is accountable and has a sound mind. . . . Persons subject to great stresses may lose control of themselves and become mentally clouded to the point that they are no longer accountable for their acts. Such are not to be condemned for taking their own lives. It should also be remembered that judgment is the Lord’s; he knows the thoughts, intents, and abilities of men; and he in his infinite wisdom will make all things right in due course.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, p. 771; some italics added.)

Not long ago I was asked to speak at the funeral of a dear friend who had committed suicide. Knowing the person and the circumstances as I did, and researching the doctrine on the subject, I had some difficult moments in preparing for my remarks. I know that any fully rational person who contemplates suicide must realize what a terribly selfish act this is. Peace came to me only when I recognized that only the Lord could administer fair judgment. He alone had all the facts, and only He would know the intent of the heart of my friend. I was reconciled with the idea that a lifetime of goodness and service to others must surely be considered by the Lord in judging the life of a person. In the Lord’s mercy, perhaps the words of Alma will apply:

“The plan of restoration is requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order. Behold, it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself.

“And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good.” (Alma 41:2–3.)

I feel that judgment for sin is not always as cut-and-dried as some of us seem to think. The Lord said, “Thou shalt not kill.” Does that mean that every [page 8] person who kills will be condemned, no matter the circumstances? Civil law recognizes that there are gradations in this matter—from accidental manslaughter to self-defense to first-degree murder. I feel that the Lord also recognizes differences in intent and circumstances: Was the person who took his life mentally ill? Was he or she so deeply depressed as to be unbalanced or otherwise emotionally disturbed? Was the suicide a tragic, pitiful call for help that went unheeded too long or progressed faster than the victim intended? Did he or she somehow not understand the seriousness of the act? Was he or she suffering from a chemical imbalance that led to despair and a loss of self-control?

Obviously, we do not know the full circumstances surrounding every suicide. Only the Lord knows all the details, and he it is who will judge our actions here on earth.

When he does judge us, I feel he will take all things into consideration: our genetic and chemical makeup, our mental state, our intellectual capacity, the teachings we have received, the traditions of our fathers, our health, and so forth.

We learn in the scriptures that the blood of Christ will atone for the sins of men “who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.” (Mosiah 3:11.)

Thus, a person who has never heard of the Word of Wisdom, for example, and who becomes an alcoholic will be judged differently from one who knows the Word of Wisdom, and understands it, and

then chooses the course that leads to alcoholism.

President Kimball's *The Miracle of Forgiveness* gives us insight into the accountability of some who commit suicide. "A minister acquaintance of mine, whom I knew rather well, was found by his wife hanging in the attic from the rafters," President Kimball wrote. "His thoughts had taken his life. He had become morose and despondent for two or more years. Certainly he had not come to suicide in a moment, for he had been a happy, pleasant person as I had known him. It must have been a long decline, ever steeper, controllable by him at first and perhaps out of hand as he neared the end of the trail. No one in his 'right mind,' and especially if he has an understanding of the gospel, will permit himself to arrive at this 'point of no return.'" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, p. 106; italics added.)

Thankfully, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught this enlightening doctrine:

"While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard. . . . He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, 'according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,' or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India. . . . We need not doubt the wisdom and intelligence of the Great Jehovah; He will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs in relation to the human family; and when the designs of God shall be made manifest, and the curtain of futurity be withdrawn, we shall all of us eventually have to confess that the Judge of all the earth has done right." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, p. 218.)

I draw an important conclusion from the words of the Prophet: Suicide is a sin—a very grievous one, yet the Lord will not judge the person who commits that sin strictly by the act itself. The Lord will look at that person's circumstances and the

degree of his accountability at the time of the act. Of course, this gives us no reason to excuse ourselves in committing sins, nor will the Lord excuse us, if I understand correctly. We must constantly strive to do our best in emulating the Savior in every aspect of our lives. At the same time, however, let us remember that spiritual growth comes "line upon line," that the key—in the spirit world as well as in mortality—is to keep progressing along the right path. ("Suicide: Some Things We Know, and Some We Do Not," *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, pp.7-8)