TERRESTRIAL KINGDOM

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches of three degrees of glory or kingdoms of heaven in the afterlife: the celestial kingdom, terrestrial kingdom, and telestial kingdom. Paul likened these kingdoms to the relative radiance of the sun, moon, and stars (1 Cor 15:40–41; cf. D&C 76:50–98). Further evidence of a heaven with multiple kingdoms is found in Jesus’ statement, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). On February 16, 1832, the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon saw in vision the three degrees of glory, identifying the glory of the terrestrial kingdom as typical “of the moon [which] differs from the sun in the firmament” (D&C 76:71).

The terrestrial glory is for those who lived honorable lives on the earth but were blinded by the craftiness of men and were “not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.” Those who did not receive a testimony of Jesus while on earth, but who could have done so except for their neglect, are also heirs to the terrestrial kingdom (D&C 76:72–74, 79). They obtain not “the crown over the kingdom of our God” (D&C 76:79) and remain without exaltation in their saved condition (D&C 132:17). They “receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father,” and their kingdom differs from the celestial “as the moon differs from the sun” (D&C 76:77–78).

[See also Degrees of Glory.]

SUSAN EASTON BLACK

TESTATOR

A testator is one who at death leaves a valid will or testament. In certain usages, the word is synonymous with witness. The term appears twice in scripture, retaining the strictly legal sense in Hebrews 9:16–17, where the death of Jesus Christ makes valid the new testament, or covenant. In Doctrine and Covenants 135:5–6, testator includes the additional connotation of “martyr” when referring to the deaths of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. The outline of Joseph Smith’s accomplishments in verse 3 underscores why Latter-day Saints regard him as a valid testator.

ROBERT L. MARROTT

TESTIMONY

[Testimony is a generic term among Latter-day Saints for the assurance of the reality, truth, and goodness of God, of the teachings and atonement of Jesus Christ, and of the divine calling of latter-day prophets. It is the core of LDS religious experience. It reaches beyond secondhand assent, notional conviction, or strong belief. It is knowledge buttressed by divine personal confirmation by the Holy Ghost and is interrelated with authentic faith and trust in God as demonstrated by dedication and discipleship. Fundamental in the Church is the doctrine that “no man can be a minister of Jesus Christ except he has the testimony of Jesus; and this is the spirit of prophecy. Whenever salvation has been administered, it has been by testimony” (TPF, p. 160).

Articles that relate to this theme and its connections with other aspects of Latter-day Saint spiritual life include Faith in Jesus Christ; Fast and Testimony Meeting; Inspiration; Knowledge; Light of Christ; Religious Experience; Revelation; Testimony Bearing; Testimony of Jesus Christ; Truth; and Witnesses, Law of.]

TESTIMONY BEARING

Testimony bearing among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a person’s verbal expression of what he or she knows to be true concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ, the restoration of the fulness of his gospel in our time, and the blessings that come from living its principles. By divine mandate, bearing testimony is to be done “in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things” (D&C 100:7). Latter-day Saints often bear testimony when teaching in Church services, when explaining gospel principles to members of other faiths, and in the fast and testimony meeting, held monthly in each congregation.

Bearing testimony while teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is pervasive in the Church and is based on two central beliefs. The first is that the primary responsibility of members is to “teach one another” (D&C 88:118) rather than to depend upon one formal teacher or minister only. The second is that the power that motivates individuals to live as Christ taught is the power of the Holy Ghost, rather than the power of logic or the elo-
quence of gospel teachers: "For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Ne. 33:1). Testimony bearing complies with the Lord’s instruction through Isaiah: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God" (Isa. 43:12).

Latter-day Saints who speak in sacrament meeting or teach classes in the organizations of the Church (i.e., Sunday school, primary, relief society, young women and young men, and priesthood) are urged to conclude their presentations by bearing personal testimony that the things which they have said are true.

Hearing testimony borne under the influence of the Holy Spirit enables those listening under the Spirit’s influence to understand the message both intellectually and spiritually (1 Cor. 2:11; D&C 50:17-24; 100:6-10).

Latter-day Saint missionaries, in particular, rely on testimony bearing, rather than on logic or argument, to reach their listeners. The impact of this faith and practice is illustrated by Brigham Young’s account of his own conversion to the gospel when as LDS missionary, Eleazar Miller, bore testimony:

If all the talent, tact, wisdom and refinement of the world had been sent to me with the Book of Mormon, and had declared, in the most exalted of earthly eloquence, the truth of it, undertaking to prove it by learning, and worldly wisdom, they would have been to me like the smoke which arises only to vanish away. But when I saw a man without eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only say, “I know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of the Lord,” the Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminated my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality were before me. I was encircled by them, filled with them, and I knew for myself that the testimony of the man was true [JD 1:90].

Fast and testimony meetings, usually held in each congregation of the Church as part of the sacrament meeting on the first Sunday of each month, provide all members the opportunity to bear testimony. In these meetings, no one is assigned in advance to prepare a sermon. Rather, any member who desires may stand before the congregation and testify of the things he or she has learned to be true through trying to live in the manner Christ has taught. Members typically come to these meetings fasting, abstaining from food and drink for at least two meals. Opportunities to bear testimony are also given to young children in primary, to young people in youth conferences or family home evenings, to missionaries in various conferences, and to all members in a wide variety of settings.

Spoken testimony is the foundation of faith and with written testimony becomes the essence of scripture. Faith comes by hearing—as well as by reading—"the word of the Lord." The Doctrine and Covenants says, "Whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost ..., [whether or not it is recorded or written] shall be scripture" and "the power of God unto salvation" (D&C 68:4). Said the Prophet Joseph Smith, “No generation was ever saved or destroyed upon dead testimony neither can be; but by Living” (WJS, p. 159). He taught further that the living word of the Lord “has such an influence over the human mind—the logical mind—that it is convincing without other testimony” (WJS, p. 159). "Faith cometh by hearing the word of God through the testimonies of the servants of God,” he said, and is "always attended by the spirit of prophecy and revelation” (WJS, p. 3). These principles are the background of the constancy of the mode of testimony bearing in Church life.

Patterns of testimony bearing in ancient churches closely parallel today’s practice. The apostle Paul, for example, said that he was “determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” and spoke “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:2-5). In early Christian sources (e.g., the Didache) one reads of sacrament meetings or feasts where hymn singing was followed by an opportunity for individual testimonies (Davies, pp. 342-43). The Book of Mormon prophet Alma concluded that the only way to reclaim his people from selfishness and pride was “in bearing down in pure testimony against them” (Alma 4:19). Amulek testified in a manner similar to Latter-day Saint testimony bearing today: “And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall come for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it” (Alma 34:8).

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TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

For Latter-day Saints, the first principle of the gospel is faith in Jesus Christ. This faith is intertwined with “the testimony of Jesus,” which is received from God, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). Joseph Smith said, “No man can know that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (TPJS, p. 223; 1 Cor. 12:3). The essence of a testimony is a personal inward assurance of Jesus Christ’s divinity, and it provides the fundamental basis for a Christian life. One becomes a disciple of Christ in the fullest spiritual sense only when a personal testimony of Jesus is received.

To have such a testimony is to be conscious that God has borne witness within one’s soul by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ (D&C 46:13). How is this witness obtained? As Paul wrote, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The testimony of Jesus Christ comes to those who hear of him. But to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached is not yet to have a testimony of him. Divine confirmation must also be received, usually in answer to sincere prayer. These three elements usually occur in a sequence: hearing, praying, receiving the divine witness by the Spirit. They can also occur simultaneously. Following Peter’s earnest declaration, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus replied, “Blessed art thou . . . for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:16–17). Like Peter, PROPHETS and APOSTLES of all ages have testified of Jesus Christ (see John 20:31).

Praying for a testimony of Jesus Christ or for any other truth of the gospel does not assume the presence of the faith being sought. The common phrase, “acting in good faith,” may offer insight here. It suggests a willingness to approach a matter not with suspicion but with trust. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma 2 asks his listeners to “awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words . . . even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27). To those willing to open their hearts at least this much, a testimony may come, but hardly to those without a fervent desire to obtain it. Most Latter-day Saints treasure the spiritual experiences that awaken and confirm testimony.

The gaining of a testimony is best viewed not as a single event but as a continuing process. Just as spiritual indolence and disobedience to the commandments of Christ constantly weaken a testimony, so close communion with God and selfless Christian service progressively strengthen it. Because Latter-day Saints view religion as an active as well as a contemplative way of life, they stress the unity of these two ends. Drawing close to God and serving others are aspects of a single purpose, following Christ. Only those who seek to do this may come to truly know him. “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13). But to all who follow him, the testimony of Jesus Christ gives an assurance of his presence, his all-enveloping care, and his love.

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DENNIS RASMUSSEN

THANKFULLNESS

From time immemorial those who believe in God have expressed their thankfulness to him. Giving humble thanks is also among the most basic religious expressions of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as with religious people everywhere. It is also a prescribed element of prayer (D&C 46:32).

In ancient times Moses offered sacrifices of thanksgiving (Lev. 7:11–13) and King Hezekiah gave “thank offerings” (2 Chr. 29:30–31). Ascribed to David are the Talmud’s One Hundred Daily Benedictions that begin with “Blessed are thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe!” and express gratitude for common as well as exceptional activities, enjoyments, natural phenomena, and encounters with remarkable persons. Upon receiving good news or blessings, the Hebrews uttered appreciation for God’s munificence; when experiencing trials they thanked God because he is just.

Jesus memorably taught the appropriateness of gratitude after he healed ten lepers on his way to Jerusalem. When only one of the ten, a Samaritan,