

Are There Three Kingdoms in Heaven?

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Mormons teach that there are three kingdoms (celestial, terrestrial, telestial) in the afterlife. They base this belief on 1 Cor. 15:40-42:

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 differs from another star in glory. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead."

Mormons teach the 3 degrees of glory in the afterlife are explained by the 3 degrees of glory of the sun, moon, and stars.

- **Telestial Kingdom**—This is the lowest of the kingdoms and all who enter will be forever living apart from the presence of Father and Jesus. The telestial glory is typified by the stars, as the people who will live here will be as innumerable as the stars. Because there are differences in the stars, there are also differences in the degrees of glory one may receive here.
- **Terrestrial Kingdom**—This glory is typified by the moon. All those who rejected the Mormon gospel in life but accept it in the spirit world will live here. They will become ministering servants to those of the telestial kingdom. No marriages are permitted in this kingdom. They will forever remain unmarried, cannot achieve the state of exaltation, and although they will have the presence of the Son, they will not receive the fullness of the Father.
- **Celestial Kingdom**— Only LDS members and children who die before the age of eight are permitted into this kingdom. The glory of this kingdom is typified by the sun. Those who gain a fullness of celestial glory will reach exaltation to become gods themselves. Mormons teach that "the third heaven" mentioned by Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2 is the celestial kingdom. This kingdom has within it three levels. Those in the highest level will eventually become gods and be given a planet to populate with spirit children.

The Bible does not teach there are 3 kingdoms

The Bible always teaches one kingdom, not three kingdoms.

The Bible always uses the word "kingdom" (singular) and never talks about "kingdoms" (plural) in the afterlife. Mormonism teaches there are three kingdoms, a doctrine that is foreign to Scripture. In fact, the word "kingdoms" is only used 3 times in the entire New Testament (Matt. 4:8, Luke 4:5, and Heb. 11:33), which all refer to kingdoms of this world.

Although we could quote hundreds of verses teaching one kingdom, here are just a few:

- The righteous gathered into one barn. In the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus tells us that all the wheat will be gathered into one barn and all the tares into bundles to be burned. The tares are all those who did not put their faith in Jesus. Matthew 25:32, 33 states that the righteous will be on his right hand and the bad on his left. He doesn't separate them into three groups.
- Daniel taught there is only one kingdom. "And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14).
- Jesus taught there is only one kingdom. "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). In Matthew 13:38, Jesus only refers to 2 groups of people, "good seed" and the "tares."
- Paul taught there is only one kingdom. "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13).
- James taught there is only one kingdom. "Listen my beloved brethren; did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (James 2:5)
- Peter taught there is only one kingdom. "For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (2 Pet. 1:11).

- John taught there is only one kingdom. “And He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:6).

The telestial kingdom is not biblical. The word “telestial” is not found in the Bible. In John 14:2,3 Jesus is talking about mansions (plural) in heaven, but He goes on to say “...that where I am, there you may be also.” So no matter where you are in heaven Jesus is with you, which refutes the LDS teachings of their three kingdoms. Why? Because according to Mormonism, Jesus is not present with people in the telestial kingdom, and the LDS church says that the telestial kingdom is also a heaven.

The different rewards in heaven does not mean separate kingdoms.

According to Mormon apostle LeGrand Richards, one of Christendom’s greatest errors is our teaching that there is one heaven and one hell. Richards wrongly points out that all those who go to heaven are given the same reward and everyone in hell will have the same punishment. But the Bible says otherwise. First Corinthians 3:10-15 and 2 Cor. 5:10 tell us that believers in Christ will have varying degrees of rewards in heaven. There are also varying degrees of punishment in hell described in Matthew 11:20-24.

The glories of the sun, moon, and stars does not prove three kingdoms.

In his book, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, Richards states “The truth, as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, emphasizes the fact that every man will receive according to his works; that there is a glory like the glory of the sun, another like that of the moon, and still another like that of the stars, and that the glory to which one shall be assigned will be determined by the things he does and the kind of life he lives.”

Why is this wrong?

- In 1 Cor. 15:40-42, Paul is writing about the resurrection bodies, not kingdoms. He is describing what the resurrection body will be like. “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of **body** do they come?” (1 Cor. 15:35). Paul is NOT giving a description of three kingdoms!
- Paul explains the differences between earthly bodies and heavenly ones (v.40), the corruptible earthly bodies to the incorruptible heavenly bodies (v.42), and gives more comparisons in verses 43 and 44. The terrestrial (earthly) body will turn into the celestial (heavenly) body at the resurrection.
- The word “telestial” is not in the Bible, but is a word that Joseph Smith coined himself to add one more kingdom to his theology.
- The analogy of the sun, moon, and stars does not mean three different kingdoms. The preceding verse (v.39) mentions 4 kinds of flesh—men, beasts, birds, and fish. If we apply this method of interpretation to that verse, we would conclude there must be 4 kingdoms.

Different degrees of glory does not mean different glories of kingdoms.

The glory of the sun, moon, and stars is not referring to three glories. There are innumerable glories of stars because v.41 says, “one star differs from another star in glory.” Ironically, there are many stars that are bigger and brighter than the sun, so if you follow the Mormon analogy, the telestial glory for unbelievers (represented by stars) is brighter than the celestial glory (represented by the sun)!

The “third heaven” mentioned by Paul (2 Cor. 12:2) isn’t talking about the celestial kingdom. The first heaven atmospheric heavens where the birds fly (Ps. 8:8, 77:17-18, 79:2, 104:12). The second heaven is the starry heavens—the moon and the stars (Gen. 22:17, Ps. 8:3, Isa. 13:10). The third heaven is the abode of God. We pray to the Father in heaven.