

THREE DEGREES OF GLORY

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Three degrees of glory by Melvin J. Ballard

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MELVIN J. BALLARD

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OF GLORY**

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DISCOURSE



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MELVIN J. BALLARD

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This is an inspiring sight, my dear brethren and sisters, a convincing testimony of your interest in this great and important feature of the latter-day work, Genealogy, the salvation for the living and the dead, for I have remarked before that in no quarter of the Church is there greater interest and activity shown in this particular work than here in these Ogden Stakes. I commend you for what you have accomplished, and, as I said in another place in this city a few months ago, surely there is nothing that will so quickly bring you a house of God, a temple of the Lord, in your community as your intense activity in this particular work.

I rejoice with you to live in this wonderful day, the most glorious and splendid that has ever dawned in the history of man. I am exceedingly happy to be here tonight in your presence to rejoice with you on this ninety-ninth anniversary of the appearance of the

Angel Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith, for it was just ninety-nine years ago tonight that Moroni spent the entire night unfolding to the Prophet the greatness of this latter-day dispensation and explaining to him for the first time, in this dispensation at least, the meaning of the promise that Elijah, the Prophet, should come again to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers lest the whole earth should be smitten with a curse. I know of no more fitting way to celebrate that wonderful event in this dispensation than to be here and discussing this subject. I rejoice because to us has been given the most splendid revelations God has ever given to man, and this is not discrediting anything of the past. It is full of glory, full of inspiration and grandeur, full of majesty and of truth!

The greatest revelation the Lord, Jesus Christ, has ever given to man in the history of His Church, so far as record is made, was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith on the 16th of April, 1832, known as the 76th section of the book of Doctrine & Covenants, commonly called for years and still known as "The Vision." I say, this to my mind is the climax of all wonderful revelations that have come from the Lord from the days of Father Adam until the present moment.

Men have been groping in darkness on some subjects, even in Gospel dispensations of the past. They have not known the fullness of God's plan and purpose for the salva-

tion of His sons and daughters, but surely this is a glorious time, for this is the dispensation of the fullness of times and all that men have ever had in all former dispensations has been given at once in this dispensation, and much that was not had in other dispensations. Oh! how wonderful it is to live now, when we are not in doubt concerning not only ourselves, but the whole scheme and plan of salvation, not only for the living, but for the dead.

Men have been speculating as to God's justice and provisions for the salvation of His children. There have been those in the past and some still remain who teach that if by the smallest margin one escapes or misses to meet the conditions of the Gospel as they interpret it they lose eternal salvation and are eternally damned to hell; and on the other hand, there are those who believe that certain individuals are marked and designated, predestined, to come into this life to be saved no matter what they did, and others to be eternally lost. There are those who are so narrow as to believe that if in this life men have not found the Way, the Light and Truth there is no hope for them beyond the grave. I rejoice to live, I say, when the fullness of truth has been given and when the answer has been made clearly and definitely in the word of the Lord to all queries on this subject.

I have sometimes had this question propounded to me by ministers and members

of other denominations: "What matters it so long as men and women are good men, good husbands, good wives, good citizens, believers in the Bible, worshippers of God and followers of Jesus Christ according to their own conception—what matters which road they take?" It is immaterial whether they are Baptist, Presbyterian, Mormon, Catholic, or what. Any road leads to the same goal, just as there are many roads leading to Ogden, and whichever road you take you ultimately get to Ogden. That is their theory.

I have said that it makes little difference in one respect whether a man has a faith and persuasion or not, or what his faith or persuasion may be. It is not this persuasion that will bring him salvation; it is his works, his faith and his devotion and his ability to comply with the terms and conditions God has provided for man's salvation, but every man that does good is drawing toward God no matter what his faith is. That is true, therefore, whichever road he travels, according to the amount of good he does, he is advancing toward the great goal, toward God and toward salvation in His kingdom.

I recognize the fact that no man will get all the way to the end of the road and gain a fullness of salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God unless he complies with all the terms and all the conditions of salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God unless he said, "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way

which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

I discover in my reading of ancient and modern scriptures that the great majority of our Father's children will only go a part of the way toward that great goal and end because they will not comply with all the terms and conditions. They will get one-third of the way, we will say, and find themselves in the Telestial Kingdom. Another group will go a little farther on the right road but they won't comply with all the terms and conditions and will not reach the end of that journey. They may go, perhaps, two-thirds of the way to the Terrestrial Glory. And few there be who will comply and find the way by which they may make the entire journey, complying with all the terms, all the conditions and ultimately reaching the end of the road, entering into the Celestial Kingdom of God; they shall obtain Celestial Glory.

That sounds reasonable, does it not? It is true. Now without speculating, and I do not wish to speculate or theorize, but confining ourselves in our discussion or consideration of this question exclusively to the word of the Lord as it has been given us, I will begin by reading a portion of the 76th section, commencing with the 50th verse:

"And again, we bear record, for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the