

CHOICES-NARRATION

CHOICES. We are not here on earth to find out what we *have* to do eternally.

We are here to find out what we *want* to do eternally.

That we can make choices is a great gift. Agency is not an automatic state of being. It is a condition that is made possible through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Without Him, we could not make choices to determine who and what we desire to be eternally. We would not have the experiences necessary for us to become who we want to be.

How he lived His mortal life showed us the way to become like Him and our Heavenly Father if that is our choice. His infinite grace makes that eternal divine potential possible.

Our mortal life and our post mortal spirit life prior to our ultimate destiny is all about choosing. Choosing who and what we want to be eternally. No external force, circumstance, condition, or person will determine that for us. Rather each of us will ultimately use our experiences in our time governed and temporary mortal and post mortal life to determine who and what we want to be.

The realization that our infinite placement is according to who we desire to be is a learned truth. The Lord gives “line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” “for he speaketh unto men according to... their understanding.” And according to our “weakness... that (we) might come to understanding.”

For example, punitive or condemning rhetoric was sometimes used by the prophets because of the wickedness and intransigence of the people when “there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness... (that) would keep them from going down speedily to (temporal) destruction. This severe approach by the prophets was “more express... that it might work upon their hearts.”

In addition, because of the lower level of spiritual understanding of those they were addressing, prophets would use milk rather than meat in their words to encourage obedience to the Lord’s directives. Their emphasis would often be on a reward for us doing certain things and punishment for doing or not doing other things rather than on making choices according to who we desired to be.

But our eternal choices are just that. Choices. President Dallin Oaks said, quote, “God’s plan gives us the teachings and the opportunity to make the choices that will assure us the destiny and the life we choose. ... (He) will send all (of His children to a kingdom) of glory according to the desires manifested through their choices.” (end quote) Our eternal state is determined by the level of transcendent laws we desire to live. With full knowledge and understanding, our ultimate destiny is what we choose it to be.

The Lord has revealed to latter-day prophets in specific and general terms what our eternal alternatives are. In addition, the Light of Christ is given to everyone to help us understand and know these alternatives so we can choose accordingly.

Perhaps our answer to a singular question is a defining statement as to the degree of transcendent laws we are desirous of living and, therefore, our final state of being:

To what extent do I want to become one with Jesus Christ?

We are here in our mortal stay to have the experiences needed to determine how we will answer that question.

The prophet Joseph Smith and his friend Sidney Rigdon were the recipients in 1832 of the visions and revelations that specifically delineate our eternal choices. They are found in Doctrine and Covenants Sections 76 and 88.

There are three major kingdoms or degrees of glory that are differentiated by the degree of light and truth each contain. By the transcendent laws their inhabitants choose to obey

The kingdom where God the Father and Jesus Christ dwell and where a fulness of light and truth exists is called the Celestial kingdom or glory and is symbolically represented by the sun. Subsequent revelations to Joseph Smith in 1843 tell us there are three degrees within the Celestial and describes those who reside in the highest one.

The second kingdom or glory is the Terrestrial and is depicted symbolically by the moon, indicating a lesser degree of light and truth.

The third kingdom or glory is the Telestial represented by stars that are significantly reduced in light and truth from the other two.

It is important to note that to dwell in the Terrestrial or Telestial kingdoms is not a punishment. It is a choice. They are both designated kingdoms and glories and are ministered to by a member of the godhead. The inhabitants of those kingdoms must abide by the laws of that glory. To underscore that each of the three are divine kingdoms and glories, the Lord has revealed that the glory of even the telestial, “surpasses all understanding.”

There is an eternal condition where no light and truth exist. It is described as “outer darkness.” Those who reside there have suffered the second death or the eternal spiritual death. They are they who have chosen to be a law unto themselves. President Joseph F. Smith describes them as those quote, “who read by the lamp of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving.” End quote. They have rejected Jesus Christ and all light and truth. Their eternal destiny is darkness and isolation. Their hell is they are surrounded by those who are just like them.

President D. Todd Christofferson has taught, quote, “the distinguishing characteristic for the inhabitants of each kingdom is how they relate to ‘The testimony of Jesus,’ ranging from (1) wholehearted devotion, to (2) not being valiant, to (3) outright rejection.” End quote.

In other words, the degree to which we desire to be one with Jesus Christ, to become as He is, to love Him purely, to offer our souls to Him, and to sacrifice as He has done to lift and bless others,

defines our eternal state. Regardless of which degree of glory one desires to be in, ultimately “every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is the Christ

Those who choose to abide in a Telestial glory or kingdom have here in their mortal state rejected Jesus Christ and have refused to follow many if not most transcendent laws. They are “they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.” Then through apparent excruciating conditions in their temporary post mortal existence, they are cleansed and ultimately accept the redeeming gift of Jesus Christ and desire to abide the laws of the Telestial kingdom. In that degree of glory they are ministered to by angels from the Terrestrial and by the Holy Ghost.

Those who are honorable men and women here on earth and choose, while not fully but at least to some degree, to follow Jesus Christ, are those who desire to live Terrestrial laws. In that kingdom, they are ministered to by Jesus Christ.

They who choose to abide the laws of a Celestial glory are those who have offered their whole souls to Jesus Christ. Their lives of service with charity, His pure love, are an irrefutable testimony of Him. They have received the empowering ordinances of the Holy Priesthood that hold the “key of the knowledge of God,” and “the power of godliness.” They have followed the transcendent laws that enable them to live eternally in the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

There are those of the celestial order who also choose to be as our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. Through the culminating sacred ordinance of the Holy Priesthood that is sealed upon them by the Holy Spirit of Promise, a man and woman are bound eternally together. They will have “a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. ...They (shall) be gods, because they have no end. (They) shall...be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue. ...They shall be gods because they have all power.” They shall be Heavenly Fathers and Heavenly Mothers for they are they who have chosen for all eternity to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”

Through Jesus Christ and as a result of our experiences in our mortal and post mortal spirit state, we choose for ourselves our eternal condition. We will have as much light and truth as we want to live.

Agency and Choice defines God’s great plan of Happiness. Choosing and becoming are what our temporary mortal and post mortal lives are all about.