

JOSEPH SMITH'S POEM, "THE ANSWER":  
A POETIC RENDITION OF "THE VISION" (D&C 76)

*A poetic letter from W.W. Phelps, and Joseph Smith's response, were first published in the Times and Seasons (Nauvoo, January 1843) and later in the Millennial Star (August 1843). The subject of Joseph's response is closely based on D&C 76.*

FROM W. W. PHELPS  
TO JOSEPH SMITH: THE PROPHET.

*Vade Mecum, (translated,) Go with Me.*

Go with me, will you go to the saints that have died,-  
To the next, better world, where the righteous reside;  
Where the angels and spirits in harmony be  
In the joys of a vast paradise? Go with me.

Go with me where the truth and the virtues prevail;  
Where the union is one, and the years never fail;  
Not a heart can conceive, nor a nat'l eye see  
What the Lord has prepar'd for the just. Go with me.

Go with me where there is no destruction or war,  
Neither tyrants, or slanders, or nations ajar;  
Where the system is perfect, and happiness free,  
And the life is eternal with God. Go with me.

Go with me, will you go to the mansions above,  
Where the bliss, and the knowledge, the light, and the love,  
And the glory of God do eternally be?-  
Death, the wages of sin, is not there. Go with me.

- Nauvoo, January, 1843.

THE ANSWER. To W. W. Phelps, esq.

*A Vision.*

1. I will go, I will go, to the home of the Saints,  
Where the virtue's the value, and life the reward;  
But before I return to my former estate  
I must fulfil the mission I had from the Lord.  
2. Wherefore, hear, O ye heavens, and give ear O ye earth;  
And rejoice ye inhabitants truly again;  
For the Lord he is God, and his life never ends,  
And besides him there ne'er was a Saviour of men.  
3. His ways are a wonder; his wisdom is great;  
The extent of his doings, there's none can unveil;  
His purposes fail not; from age unto age  
He still is the same, and his years never fail.  
4. His throne is the heavens, his life time is all  
Of eternity now, and eternity then;  
His union is power, and none stays his hand,-  
The Alpha, Omega, for ever: Amen.  
5. For thus saith the Lord, in the spirit of truth,  
I am merciful, gracious, and good unto those  
That fear me, and live for the life that's to come;  
My delight is to honor the saints with repose;  
6. That serve me in righteousness true to the end;  
Eternal's their glory, and great their reward;  
I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them,-  
The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd-  
7. From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth.  
And for ages to come unto them I will show  
My pleasure & will, what my kingdom will do:  
Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.  
8. Great things of the future I'll show unto them,  
Yea, things of the vast generations to rise;  
For their wisdom and glory shall be very great,  
And their pure understanding extend to the skies:  
9. And before them the wisdom of wise men shall cease,  
And the nice understanding of prudent ones fail!  
For the light of my spirit shall light mine elect,  
And the truth is so mighty 't will ever prevail.  
10. And the secrets and plans of my will I'll reveal;

The sanctified pleasures when earth is renew'd,  
What the eye hath not seen, nor the earth hath yet heard;  
Nor the heart of the natural man ever hath view'd.

11. I, Joseph, the prophet, in spirit beheld,  
And the eyes of the inner man truly did see  
Eternity sketch'd in a vision from God,  
Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be.  
12. Those things which the Father ordained of old,  
Before the world was, or a system had run,-  
Through Jesus the Maker and Savior of all;  
The only begotten, (Messiah) his son.  
13. Of whom I bear record, as all prophets have,  
And the record I bear is the fulness,-yea even  
The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ,  
With whom I convers'd, in the vision of heav'n.  
14. For while in the act of translating his word,  
Which the Lord in his grace had appointed to me,  
I came to the gospel recorded by John,  
Chapter fifth and the twenty ninth verse, which you'll see.  
Which was given as follows: "Speaking of the resurrection of  
the dead, Concerning those who shall hear the voice of the son  
of man- And shall come forth:- They who have done good in  
the resurrection of the just. And they who have done evil in  
the resurrection of the unjust."  
15. I marvel'd at these resurrections, indeed!  
For it came unto me by the spirit direct:-  
And while I did meditate what it all meant,  
The Lord touch'd the eyes of my own intellect:-  
16. Hosanna forever! they open'd anon,  
And the glory of God shone around where I was;  
And there was the Son, at the Father's right hand,  
In a fulness of glory, and holy applause.  
17. I beheld round the throne, holy angels and hosts,  
And sanctified beings from worlds that have been,  
In holiness worshipping God and the Lamb,  
Forever and ever, amen and amen!  
18. And now after all of the proofs made of him,  
By witnesses truly, by whom he was known,  
This is mine, last of all, that he lives; yea he lives!  
And sits at the right hand of God, on his throne.  
19. And I heard a great voice, bearing record from heav'n,  
He's the Saviour, and only begotten of God-  
By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,  
Even all that career in the heavens so broad,  
20. Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,  
Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;  
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons,  
By the very same truths, and the very same pow'rs.  
21. And I saw and bear record of warfare in heav'n;  
For an angel of light, in authority great,  
Rebell'd against Jesus, and sought for his pow'r,  
But was thrust down to woe from his Godified state.  
22. And the heavens all wept, and the tears drop'd like dew,  
That Lucifer, son of the morning had fell!  
Yea, is fallen! is fall'n, and become, Oh, alas!  
The sons of Perdition; the devil of hell!  
23. And while I was yet in the spirit of truth,  
The commandment was: write ye the vision all out;  
For Satan, old serpent, the devil's for war,-  
And yet will encompass the saints round about.  
24. And I saw, too, the suffering and misery of those,  
(Overcome by the devil, in warfare and fight.)  
In hell-fire, and vengeance, the doom of the damn'd;  
For the Lord said, the vision is further: so write.  
25. For thus saith the Lord, now concerning all those  
Who know of my power and partake of the same;  
And suffer themselves, that they be overcome  
By the power of Satan; despising my name:-  
26. Defying my power, and denying the truth;-  
They are they-of the world, or of men, most forlorn,

The Sons of Perdition, of whom, ah! I say,  
'T were better for them had they never been born!  
27. They're vessels of wrath, and dishonor to God,  
Doom'd to suffer his wrath, in the regions of woe,  
Through the terrific night of eternity's round,  
With the devil and all of his angels below:  
28. Of whom it is said, no forgiveness is giv'n,  
In this world, alas! nor the world that's to come;  
For they have denied the spirit of God,  
After having receiv'd it: and misery's their doom.  
29. And denying the only begotten of God,-  
And crucify him to themselves, as they do,  
And openly put him to shame in their flesh,  
By gospel they cannot repentance renew.  
30. They are they, who must go to the great lake of fire,  
Which burneth with brimstone, yet never consumes,  
And dwell with the devil, and angels of his,  
While eternity goes and eternity comes.  
31. They are they, who must groan through the great second  
death,  
And are not redeemed in the time of the Lord;  
While all the rest are, through the triumph of Christ,  
Made partakers of grace, by the power of his word.  
32. The myst'ry of Godliness truly is great;-  
The past, and the present, and what is to be;  
And this is the gospel-glad tidings to all,  
Which the voice from the heavens bore record to me:  
33. That he came to the world in the middle of time,  
To lay down his life for his friends and his foes,  
And bear away sin as a mission of love;  
And sanctify earth for a blessed repose.  
34. 'Tis decreed, that he'll save all the work of his hands,  
And sanctify them by his own precious blood;  
And purify earth for the Sabbath of rest,  
By the agent of fire, as it was by the flood.  
35. The Saviour will save all his Father did give,  
Even all that he gave in the regions abroad,  
Save the Sons of Perdition: They're lost; ever lost,  
And can never return to the presence of God.  
36. They are they, who must reign with the devil in hell,  
In eternity now, and eternity then,  
Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'd;-  
And the punishment still, is eternal. Amen.  
37. And which is the torment apostates receive,  
But the end, or the place where the torment began,  
Save to them who are made to partake of the same,  
Was never, nor will be, revealed unto man.  
38. Yet God shows by vision a glimpse of their fate,  
And straightway he closes the scene that was shown:  
So the width, or the depth, or the misery thereof,  
Save to those that partake, is forever unknown.  
39. And while I was pondering, the vision was closed;  
And the voice said to me, write the vision: for lo!  
'Tis the end of the scene of the sufferings of those,  
Who remain filthy still in their anguish and woe.  
40. And again I bear record of heavenly things,  
Where virtue's the value, above all that's pric'd-  
Of the truth of the gospel concerning the just,  
That rise in the first resurrection of Christ.  
41. Who receiv'd and believ'd, and repented likewise,  
And then were baptis'd, as a man always was,  
Who ask'd and receiv'd a remission of sin,  
And honored the kingdom by keeping its laws.  
42. Being buried in water, as Jesus had been,  
And keeping the whole of his holy commands,  
They received the gift of the spirit of truth,  
By the ordinance truly of laying on hands.  
43. For these overcome, by their faith and their works,  
Being tried in their life-time, as purified gold,  
And seal'd by the spirit of promise, to life,

By men called of God, as was Aaron of old.  
 44. They are they, of the church of the first born of God,-  
 And unto whose hands he committeth all things;  
 For they hold the keys of the kingdom of heav'n,  
 And reign with the Savior, as priests, and as kings.  
 45. They're priests of the order of Melchisedek,  
 Like Jesus, (from whom is this highest reward,)  
 Receiving a fulness of glory and light;  
 As written: They're Gods; even sons of the Lord.  
 46. So all things are theirs; yea, of life, or of death;  
 Yea, whether things now, or to come, all are theirs,  
 And they are the Savior's, and he is the Lord's,  
 Having overcome all, as eternity's heirs.  
 47. 'Tis wisdom that man never glory in man,  
 But give God the glory for all that he hath;  
 For the righteous will walk in the presence of God,  
 While the wicked are trod under foot in his wrath.  
 48. Yea, the righteous shall dwell in the presence of God,  
 And of Jesus, forever, from earth's second birth-  
 For when he comes down in the splendor of heav'n,  
 All these he'll bring with him, to reign on the earth.  
 49. These are they that arise in their bodies of flesh,  
 When the trump of the first resurrection shall sound;  
 These are they that come up to Mount Zion, in life,  
 Where the blessings and gifts of the spirit abound.  
 50. These are they that have come to the heavenly place;  
 To the numberless courses of angels above:  
 To the city of God; e'en the holiest of all,  
 And the home of the blessed, the fountain of love:  
 51. To the church of old Enoch, and of the first born:  
 And gen'ral assembly of ancient renown'd,  
 Whose names are all kept in the archives of heav'n,  
 As chosen and faithful, and fit to be crown'd.  
 52. These are they that are perfect through Jesus' own blood,  
 Whose bodies celestial are mention'd by Paul,  
 Where the sun is the typical glory thereof,  
 And God, and his Christ, are the true judge of all.  
 53. Again I beheld the terrestrial world,  
 In the order and glory of Jesus, go on;  
 'Twas not as the church of the first born of God,  
 But shone in its place, as the moon to the sun.  
 54. Behold, these are they that have died without law;  
 The heathen of ages that never had hope,  
 And those of the region and shadow of death,  
 The spirits in prison, that light has brought up.  
 55. To spirits in prison the Savior once preach'd,  
 And taught them the gospel, with powers afresh;  
 And then were the living baptiz'd for their dead,  
 That they might be judg'd as if men in the flesh.  
 56. These are they that are hon'rabl men of the earth;  
 Who were blinded and dup'd by the cunning of men:  
 They receiv'd not the truth of the Savior at first;  
 But did, when they heard it in prison, again.  
 57. Not valiant for truth, they obtain'd not the crown,  
 But are of that glory that's typ'd by the moon:  
 They are they, that come into the presence of Christ,  
 But not to the fulness of God, on his throne.  
 58. Again I beheld the teletial, as third,  
 The lesser, or starry world, next in its place,  
 For the leaven must leaven three measures of meal,  
 And every 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 different 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 ministr'ng angels, to happyfy there.  
 63. And so the teletial 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 teletial glory, dominion and bliss,  
 Surpassing the great understanding of men,-  
 Unknown, save reveal'd, in a world vain as this.  
 65. And lo, I beheld the terrestrial, too,  
 Which excels the teletial in glory and light,  
 In splendor, and knowledge, and wisdom, and joy,  
 In blessings, and graces, dominion and might.  
 66. I beheld the celestial, in glory sublime;  
 Which is the most excellent kingdom that is,-  
 Where God, e'en the Father, in harmony reigns;  
 Almighty, supreme, and eternal, in bliss.  
 67. Where the church of the first born in union reside,  
 And they see as they're seen, and they know as they're known;  
 Being equal in power, dominion and might,  
 With a fulness of glory and grace, round his throne.  
 68. The glory celestial is one like the sun;  
 The glory terrest'al is one like the moon;  
 The glory teletial is one like the stars,  
 And all harmonize like the parts of a tune.  
 69. As the stars are all different in lustre and size,  
 So the teletial 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 gather'd 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, sorcer'rs, 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 teletial 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.  
 77. But the great things of God, which he show'd unto me,  
 Unlawful to utter, I dare not declare;  
 They surpass all the wisdom and greatness of men,  
 And only are seen, as has Paul, where they are.  
 78. I will go, I will go, while the secret of life,  
 Is blooming in heaven, and blasting in hell;  
 Is leaving on earth, and a budding in space:-  
 I will go, I will go, with you, brother, farewell.

- Nauvoo, Feb. 1843. (Times and Seasons 4:81-85)

## Quotes on D&C 76: "The Vision"

**Joseph Smith:** *Every law, every commandment, every promise, every truth, and every point touching the destiny of man, from Genesis to Revelation, where the purity of the Scriptures remain unsullied by the folly of men, go to show the perfection of the theory (of different degrees of glory in the future life) and witness the fact that the document is a transcript from the records of the eternal world....[It is] so much beyond the narrow-mindedness of men, that every man is constrained to exclaim: "It came from God." (Feb., 1832.) DHC 1:252-253.*

- Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.11

**Wilford Woodruff, April 3, 1881:** *I will refer to the "Vision" alone, as a revelation which gives more light, more truth, and more principle than any revelation contained in any other book we ever read.*

- Journal of Discourses, Vol.22, p.145 - p.146 - p.147

**Melvin J. Ballard:** *The greatest revelation the Lord, Jesus Christ, has ever given to man, so far as record is made, was...the 76th section of the D&C, 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.*

- Three Degrees of Glory, p.3

**Joseph Smith:** *We ought to study [D&C 76] day and night, for the world is ignorant in reference to their true condition and relation....Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.*

- History of the Church, Vol.6, Ch.2, p.50

**Joseph Smith:** *I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.*

- History of the Church, Vol.5, Ch.21, p.402

**President Spencer W. Kimball:** *After a person has been assigned his place in the kingdom, either in the teletial, the terrestrial or the celestial, or to his exaltation, he will never advance from his assigned glory to another glory. That is eternal!*

- Miracle of Forgiveness, pp. 243-244

**Joseph F. Smith:** *The Prophet's statement that there will be wicked men on the earth during the Millennium has caused considerable confusion in the minds of many who have read in the Scripture in many places that when Christ comes the earth shall be cleansed from its wickedness, and that the wicked shall not stand, but shall be consumed. See D&C 5:18-19, 29:8-10, 101:23-25; Isaiah 24:1-3; Malachi 4:1. The evil-minded inhabitants, those "who love and make a lie" and are guilty of all manner of corruption, will be consumed and pass away when Christ comes. In using the term "wicked men" in this instruction at the home of Judge Adams, the Prophet did so in the same sense in which the Lord uses it in the eighty-fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, 49-53. The Lord in this scripture speaks of those who have not received the Gospel as being under the bondage of sin, and hence "wicked." However, many of these people are honorable, clean living men, but they have not embraced the Gospel. The inhabitants of the terrestrial order will remain on the earth during the Millennium, and this class are without the Gospel ordinances. See D&C 76:73-76.*

- Teachings of Prophet Joseph Smith, Footnote #2, p.268