

3 Nephi 28: 1*What is it that ye desire?*

1 The prophet and his leaders seek to educate our very desires, for God finally gives to each man the desires of his heart.

Neal A. Maxwell, *Of One Heart*, 3

3 Nephi 28: 2-40*Transfigured and Translated*

2 It is to a modern revelation that we turn to learn what really became of John the Apostle, known also as the Beloved and the Revelator. In April of 1829 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were discussing the mission of John; whether he had died or been allowed to live on. Through the Urim and Thummin the Prophet saw a translated version of a record made by John and hidden up. The restored knowledge is as follows:

“And the Lord said unto me: John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will it shall be granted unto you. And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily I say unto thee, because thou desirest this, thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter: If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desired of me that he might bring souls unto me, but thou desirest that thou mightiest speedily come unto me in my kingdom. I say to thee, Peter, this was a good desire; but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work yet among men than what he has before done. Yea, he has undertaken a greater work, therefore I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel; he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth. And I make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James; and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come. Verily I say unto you, ye shall both have according to your desires, for ye both joy in that which ye have desired.” (D&C 7:1-8.)

John the Beloved and the Three Nephites were translated. They were allowed to live on, to minister on earth, to continue their apostolic duties among the children of men until their Lord returned in glory at the time of his second coming. In speaking of Enoch, the antediluvian prophet-patriarch who also had been translated some three thousand years before Christ, Joseph Smith said: “Now this Enoch God reserved unto Himself, that he should not die at that time, and appointed unto him a ministry unto terrestrial bodies, of whom there has been little revealed. He is reserved also unto the presidency of a dispensation, and more shall be said of him and terrestrial bodies in another treatise. He is a ministering angel, to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation... Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God and into an eternal fullness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness as those who are resurrected from the dead. ‘Others

were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.’ (see Hebrews 11:35.)

“Now it was evident that there was a better resurrection, or else God would not have revealed it unto Paul. Wherein then, can it be said a better resurrection. This distinction is made between the doctrine of the actual resurrection and translation: translation obtains deliverance from the tortures and sufferings of the body, but their existence will prolong the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great rest and glory.” (Teachings, pp.170-71.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “Some mortals have been translated. In this state they are not subject to sorrow [except for the sins of the world-3 Nephi 28:9] or to disease or to death. No longer does blood (the life-giving element of our present mortality) flow in their veins. Procreation ceases. If they then had children, their offspring would then be denied a mortal probation, which all worthy spirits must receive in due course. They have power to move and live in both a mortal and an unseen sphere. All translated beings undergo another change in their bodies when they gain full immortality. This change is the equivalent of a resurrection. Millennial man will live in a state akin to translation. His body will be changed so that it is no longer subject disease or death as we know it, although he will be changed in the twinkling of an eye to full immortality when he is a hundred years of age.” (Millennial Messiah, p. 644.)
Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, 4 vols., 4., p. 188-189.*

3 The difference, then, between transfiguration and translation is that transfiguration is more temporary. The Three Nephites were transfigured for a time so that they could view the visions of eternity. They were also translated, which condition is of a longer duration, until the Judgment Day.

Book of Mormon Student Manual: Religion 121 and 122 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989], 127.

4 We are telestial mortals, translated beings are terrestrial mortals, while exalted resurrected beings are celestial immortals.

Richard Cowan, *Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, ed. by Nyman and Tate [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992], 201-202.

5 Grease on the swimmer’s body or a heavy rubber skin diver’s suit may protect one from the cold and wet; an asbestos suit might protect a fire-fighter from flames; a bullet-proof vest may save the policeman from assassin’s bullets; one’s heated home may protect from winter’s chilling blasts; deep shade or smoked glass can modify the withering heat and burning rays of the midday sun. There is a protective force which God brings into play when he exposes his human servants to the glories of his person and his works.

Moses explained that he could endure the divine presence because “.... The glory of God,” ... was upon him.

Jehovah said: “Wherefore, no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth” (Moses 1:5)...

It is significant to note that when the protection from such transcendent glory was relaxed, that Moses was left weak and near helpless.

Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964], 95

6 In a little while you will find another prophecy will be fulfilled, and that is the prophecy that Jesus made to the three Nephites who, having power over death, are still living upon this continent. He spoke to them of a time when they would perform a great and mighty work among the Gentiles; and that has not yet been fulfilled, but it will be. You will find that many districts where the Elders of Israel cannot teach will be penetrated by these men who have power over death... My testimony is that these men are going abroad in the nations of the earth before the face of your sons, and they are preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive the Gospel. They are administering to those who are heirs of salvation, and preparing their hearts to receive the truth, just as the farmer prepares the soil to receive the seed. The Lord has promised that He would send His angels before the face of His servants, and He does so.

John W. Taylor, in Conference Report, Oct. 1902 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1902], 75.

7 The question in the minds of some readers as to whether or not John (see John 21:21-24.) and the three Nephite disciples are still mortal—that is, must these men still suffer a physical death? The answer to this question is “Yes, they are still mortal, for they still must die.” The Savior clearly indicated this when he told the three Nephite disciples, “*when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality*” (3 Nephi 28:8. Italics added). Thus their spirits will be separated from their bodies (which is physical death) but will come back into their bodies (which is their resurrection) in the “twinkling of an eye”—that is, almost immediately.

Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 293.

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- They will not taste death (vv. 7-8).
 - They will be changed to a resurrected state at the Second Coming (vv. 7-8, 39-40).
 - They suffer no pain or sorrow (v. 9).
 - Their joy is full (v. 10).
 - They have a change in their bodies equivalent to a long-term “transfiguration”—we usually refer to it as translation (vv. 15, 37-39).
 - They teach, baptize, and interact with mortals (v.18).
 - They can’t be incarcerated, they can’t be burned, they can’t be eaten by wild beasts (vv.19-22).
 - They can appear and disappear and travel from place to place like angels (v. 30).
 - Satan can’t tempt them and has no power over them (v. 39).

Brian D. Garner, *Search These Things Diligently*, p. 289

3 Nephi 28:8*Changed in a twinkling of an eye*

9 There is no funeral, no mourning, no grave. For translated beings, their death is more like an ordinance than a time of parting and separation...

There are at least three major differences between the translated state of the Three Nephites and the translated-like condition of those who live during the Millennium. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written:

“Millennial man will live in a state akin to translation... He will, however, *have children*, and mortal life of a millennial kind will continue... There will be those who are on probation, for whom earth *life is a probationary estate*, and who are thus working out their own salvation... Isaiah’s description of life and death during the Millennium seems to preserve the concept that even then—even in that blessed day when Satan is bound and righteousness overflows—even then men are *free to come out in open rebellion* and, as sinners, suffer the fate reserved for the sons of perdition. Manifestly they, being accursed, would die the death with which we are familiar. (*Millennial Messiah* 644, 646; emphasis added; see also Isa. 65:20).

Clyde J. Williams, *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This is My Gospel*, ed. by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University Press, 1993], 241-242.

3 Nephi 28:10

10 *Sit down in kingdom of my father*

It was a sure promise to mortal men that they could become gods. In short, these Nephite Apostles had their callings and election made sure. Such is the case with all who have been found worthy to be translated.

Clyde J. Williams, *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This is My Gospel*, ed. by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University Press, 1993], 242-243.

3 Nephi 28:11

11 *Holy Ghost*

The Holy Ghost sometimes called the Comforter, is the third member of the Godhead, and is a personage, distinct from the Holy Spirit. As a personage, the Holy Ghost cannot any more than the Father and Son be everywhere present in person. Little has been revealed as yet concerning the Holy Ghost; but it is evident that His mission is to bear witness to men of the existence of God and the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and also to fill men with knowledge and power and to inspire them to works leading to happiness.

John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and reconciliations*, 76-77.

3 Nephi 28: 13-14, 16

12 *Forbidden them that they should utter*

If a person understands God and godliness, the principles of heaven, the principle of integrity, and the Lord reveals anything to that individual, no matter what, unless He gives

permission to disclose it, it is locked up in eternal silence. And when persons have proven to their messengers that their bosoms are like the lock-ups of eternity, then the Lord says, I can reveal anything to them, because they never will disclose it until I tell them to. Take persons of any other character, and they sap the foundation of the confidence they ought to have in themselves and in their God.

Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1887], 4:288.

13 The Lord entrusted this sacred knowledge with the Three Nephites because he knew they could be trusted. He knew they would keep confidential those things revealed to them. Mormon was careful to let us know that while these three began to minister upon the face of the earth, “they did not minister of the things which they had heard and seen because of the commandment which was given them in heaven” (3 Nephi 28:16).

This principle is important to all who would desire to know about the mysteries of God. Clyde J. Williams, *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This is My Gospel*, ed. by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham, Young University Press, 1993], 244.

3 Nephi 28: 27-32

14 In a little while you will find another prophecy will be fulfilled, and that is the prophecy that Jesus made to the three Nephites who, having power over death, are still living upon this continent. He spoke to them of a time when they would perform a great and mighty work among the Gentiles; and that has not yet been fulfilled, but it will be. You will find that many districts where the Elders of Israel cannot reach will be penetrated by these men who have power over death... My testimony is that these men are going abroad in the nations of the earth before the face of your sons, and they are preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive the Gospel. They are administering to those who are heirs of salvation, and preparing their hearts to receive the truth, just as the farmer prepares the soil to receive the seed. The Lord has promised that He would send His angels before the face of His servants, and He does so.

John W. Taylor, Conference, Oct. 1902, p. 75.

3 Nephi 28: 30

As the Angels

15 This would seem to mean that travel and distances are of no consequence to them. We would suppose that walls and other mortal barriers are also insignificant. Because of their extraordinary powers and the prophetic words of the Savior himself, which we do not yet possess.

Clyde J. Williams, *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This is My Gospel*, ed. by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University Press, 1993], 246.

3 Nephi 28: 34-35

16 Jesus and his servants are one; to believe in those whom He hath sent is to believe in Him, and to reject His messengers is to reject Him.

Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4:396.

3 Nephi 28: 37*Inquired of the Lord*

17 Understanding requires desire and patience. One's faith can be strengthened by... reading the scriptures with a happy frame of mind and desire to absorb additional truth... As one reads something which does not for the moment seem to have meaning he can put that item on the shelf and move forward with the reading. In most instances the additional information gained and faith developed seems to provide the background so that the un-understandable item falls naturally into place. If anything seems to counter previous concepts, one can read and study and ponder and pray and wait and usually a clarification comes.

The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 136.

3 Nephi 28: 38*No sorrow save it were for the sins of the World*

18 Theirs is not a life devoid of feeling or understanding, but neither are they hindered by the frailties of the human body. Unfortunately, because of the wickedness which covers the land, there must be numerous times when their souls are full of sorrow because of the course so many of humankind have chosen to take. Sometime between AD 245 and 300 the wickedness among the Lamanites and Nephites became so widespread that "the disciples began to sorrow for the sins of the world" (4 Nephi 1:44). By AD 326 the wickedness had become so prevalent that the Lord took the Three Nephites away from openly ministering among the people (Mormon 1:13; 8:10).

Clyde J. Williams, *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, ed. by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University Press, 1993], 242.

3 Nephi 28: 39*Satan could have no power over them*

19 This blessing was not given by drawing them out of the mire of sin and wickedness and placing them beyond Satan's reach. Rather, these Nephite faithful had already bound Satan in their lives or they could not have received their request...

The fact that Satan could no longer tempt these three is further evidence that for them the day of judgment had been moved up. Their calling and election was made sure.

Clyde J. Williams, *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, ed. by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University Press, 1993], 246.