

Comments on 3 Nephi 28

Following on the theme of ch. 27, after finding out what the people of the church wanted, Jesus now finds out what the twelve disciples want.

1 AND it came to pass when Jesus had said these words, he spake unto his disciples, one by one, saying unto them: what is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father? 2 And they all spake, save it were three, saying: we desire that after we have lived unto the age of man, that our ministry, wherein thou hast called us, may have an end, that we may speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom. 3 And he said unto them: Blessed are ye because ye desired this thing of me; therefore, after that ye are seventy and two years old ye shall come unto me in my kingdom; and with me ye shall find rest.

v1-3 After Jesus finishes with the question concerning the name of the church, he asks the disciples what it is they want to see happen after Jesus leaves them (v. 1). Nine of the twelve say they want to live full lives and then be delivered into the kingdom of God (v. 2). Jesus blesses them for this and tells them they will all live to at least 72 years and then join with Him in His kingdom (v. 3).

4 And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three, and said unto them: what will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father? 5 And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.

6 And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me. 7 Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. 8 And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father. 9 And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world; and all this will I do because of the thing which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring the souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand.

10 And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one; 11 And the Holy Ghost beareth record of

the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me.

12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed. 13 And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. 14 And it was forbidden them that they should utter; neither was it given unto them power that they could utter the things which they saw and heard; 15 And whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell; for it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God. 16 But it came to pass that they did again minister upon the face of the earth; nevertheless they did not minister of the things which they had heard and seen, because of the commandment which was given them in heaven.

v4-16 Jesus turns his attention to the other 3 who have not yet answered, and asks them what it is they want (v. 4). They know what they want, but are afraid to ask for it (v. 5). Jesus perceives their thoughts and knows they want the same thing John the Beloved wanted (v. 6). Jesus then pronounces a greater blessing on these three as they will never experience a separation of the spirit and the flesh. They will see all of the works of the Father among mortal men until the Second Advent (v. 7), and then they will receive their immortal bodies and eternal life (v. 8). They will no longer experience pain and suffering of the mortal body as they previously had, but they will still experience emotional sorrow and pain.

Jesus says he will do this because their desire is to bring people to him as much as possible (v. 9). For this desire Jesus blesses them with the same kind of joy he himself experiences and the promise that they will be like him and united with the Father (v. 10) and the Holy Spirit (v. 11).

Jesus then touches the nine disciples and he is caught up into heaven (v. 12) with the three disciples. The three disciples see and hear things (v. 13) which they are not permitted to share (v. 14). Whether they were taken up into heaven in their bodies, or whether it was a vision they could not tell. Some sort of transformation occurred such that their mortal bodies were sufficiently changed to permit them to see the heavenly things of God (v. 15). But, even though they were changed, they still were among mortals on the earth. However, they never said anything about what they saw of heaven (v. 16).

v3 Jesus is effectively making the calling and election sure for these nine disciples. We know from 19:25 that they were

sanctified, so it is plain that these people had already completely reconciled themselves to the will of the Father.

v11 "the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me", cp. 15:23, John 16:7.

17 And now, whether they were mortal or immortal, from the day of their transfiguration, I know not; 18 But this much I know, according to the record which hath been given--they did go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people, uniting as many to the church as would believe in their preaching; baptizing them, and as many as were baptized did receive the Holy Ghost. 19 And they were cast into prison by them who did not belong to the church. And the prisons could not hold them, for they were rent in twain. 20 And they were cast down into the earth; but they did smite the earth with the word of God, insomuch that by his power they were delivered out of the depths of the earth; and therefore they could not dig pits sufficient to hold them. 21 And thrice they were cast into a furnace and received no harm. 22 And twice were they cast into a den of wild beasts; and behold they did play with the beasts as a child with a suckling lamb, and received no harm. 23 And it came to pass that thus they did go forth among all the people of Nephi, and did preach the gospel of Christ unto all people upon the face of the land; and they were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ, and thus the people of that generation were blessed, according to the word of Jesus.

v17-35 Mormon comments on the past (v. 17-23), present (v. 24-26), and future (v. 27-35) activities of the three disciples.

We tend to focus on the supernatural elements of the story, when the text focuses on their desire to preach the gospel and bring people to Christ. As special witnesses, this small group has exceptional power in testimony among natural Israel (v. 23) and Gentiles (v. 27-29) alike, which is their intent (v. 6) and the Lord's purpose for them (v. 29-32).

v17-23 Mormon reviews the three disciples' activities among the Lehites to date. He admits he presently is unsure of the condition of their bodies, whether they are mortal or immortal (v. 17), but aside from this he does know what they have done. So, he summarizes their activities. They traveled among all the Lehites and unite all who believe their preaching to the church by baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit (v. 18, 23). They also suffered considerable persecution at the hands of nonbelievers (v. 19-22, cp. 4 Ne. 1:30-33).

v17 These translated persons are apparently no different looking than a mortal as Mormon has seen them (cf. v. 26) and

yet sees nothing noteworthy about them by casual observation. It is not until he seeks particular revelation concerning their mortal status (cf. v. 36-40) that he is apprised of their true condition.

v23 Compare 9:12-13, 4 Ne. 1:1-3.

24 And now I, Mormon, make an end of speaking concerning these things for a time. 25 Behold, I was about to write the names of those who were never to taste of death, but the Lord forbade; therefore I write them not, for they are hid from the world. 26 But behold, I have seen them, and they have ministered unto me.

27 And behold they will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall know them not. 28 They will also be among the Jews, and the Jews shall know them not. 29 And it shall come to pass, when the Lord seeth fit in his wisdom that they shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled, and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them.

30 And they are as the angels of God, and if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good. 31 Therefore, great and marvelous works shall be wrought by them, before the great and coming day when all people must surely stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; 32 Yea even among the Gentiles shall there be a great and marvelous work wrought by them, before that judgment day. 33 And if ye had all the scriptures which give an account of all the marvelous works of Christ, ye would, according to the words of Christ, know that these things must surely come.

34 And wo be unto him that will not hearken unto the words of Jesus, and also to them whom he hath chosen and sent among them; for whoso receiveth not the words of Jesus and the words of those whom he hath sent receiveth not him; and therefore he will not receive them at the last day; 35 And it would be better for them if they had not been born. For do ye suppose that ye can get rid of the justice of an offended God, who hath been trampled under feet of men, that thereby salvation might come?

v24-35 Mormon stops speaking concerning the past history of the three disciples among the Lehites (v. 24), indicates he has seen them himself (v. 25-26), and then discusses the future role of the three disciples among the Gentiles (v. 27-35).

Mormon has presently seen the three disciples and even knows them by name, but has been forbidden from divulging those names (v. 25-26).

In the future the three disciples will be among both the Gentiles and the Jews and they will not be aware of them (v. 27-28). The Lord will have the three disciples participate in the

gathering of Israel, preaching the gospel (v. 29) to whoever they see fit (v. 30). And thus they will perform a great and marvelous work among the Gentiles before the Day of the Lord (v. 31-32).

If the reader had access to all the words of Christ, then they would realize this great and marvelous work by the three disciples must happen before the Day of the Lord (v. 33). Woe to those who will reject the work these disciples will do in the name of the Lord (v. 34), as those who reject the means of their own salvation will have God's justice against them (v. 35).

v25 The names of all twelve disciples can be found in 19:4. Not giving the names of angels is standard practice, cf. Gen. 32:29, Judges 13:18. The practice of not giving angel's names is twofold. The first is these messengers are not acting under their own authority, but are acting in the name of the Lord at His behest. Thus, in order to avoid confusion on the part of mortal witnesses, the angels decline to give their names so as to completely defer to the Lord. Second is the superstitious belief that one can conjure or adjure angels or demons if you know their name. The Lord would obviously want to avoid such things.

v30 "as the angels", concerning angels, Smith taught the following:

The difference between an angel and a ministering spirit: the one [the first] is a resurrected or translated body with its spirit, ministering to embodied spirits; the other a disembodied spirit, visiting and ministering to disembodied spirits.

Jesus Christ became a ministering spirit (while his body was laying in the sepulchre) to the spirits in prison, to fulfill an important part of his mission, without which he could not have perfected his work or entered into his rest. After his resurrection he appeared as an angel to his disciples. (St. Matt, xxvii:16-20).

Translated bodies cannot enter into rest until they have undergone a change equivalent to death.... Translated bodies are designed for future missions.... The angel which appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos was a translated or resurrected personage. (Rev. xix:10).

Jesus Christ went in body after his resurrection to minister to translated or resurrected bodies. (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 2, ch. 44, page 91)

v33-35 What Mormon is referring to in these verses is the subject of v. 31-32. He is casting woe upon the Gentiles who reject the great and marvelous work which the three disciples are to be involved with. He picks up this theme and expands on it considerably in ch. 29-30.

36 And now behold, as I spake concerning those whom the Lord hath chosen, yea, even three who were caught up into the heavens, that I knew not whether they were cleansed from mortality to immortality-- 37 But behold, since I wrote, I have inquired of the Lord, and he hath made it manifest unto me that there must needs be a change wrought upon their bodies, or else it needs be that they must taste of death; 38 Therefore, that they might not taste of death there was a change wrought upon their bodies, that they might not suffer pain nor sorrow save it were for the sins of the world. 39 Now this change was not equal to that which shall take place at the last day; but there was a change wrought upon them, insomuch that Satan could have no power over them, that he could not tempt them; and they were sanctified in the flesh, that they were holy, and that the powers of the earth could not hold them. 40 And in this state they were to remain until the judgment day of Christ; and at that day they were to receive a greater change, and to be received into the kingdom of the Father to go no more out, but to dwell with God eternally in the heavens.

v36-40 Here Mormon gives us a parenthetical comment on the nature of translated bodies. He obviously had considerable interest in the matter given his comments in v. 15-17 and was aware their capabilities exceeded that of mortals given v. 19-22 and v. 30. His curiosity obviously drive him to question the Lord on the matter and he received an answer on it.

Regarding those three disciples who were caught up into heaven (v. 36) it has been revealed to Mormon that a change has been made to their mortal bodies so they would not physically die (v. 37) or suffer the physical ailments of mortality (v. 38). This change is not the same as being resurrected, but the change does put them beyond the ability of Satan to tempt them and does give them power over earthly things (v. 39). They will remain in this condition until the Day of the Lord, at which time they will be fully resurrected and exalted (v. 40).

v38 "there was a change wrought upon their bodies", if they were sanctified to the point where even the adversary could no longer tempt them then their bodies are even "better" than those which Adam and Eve possessed prior to the Fall. Adam and Even in the Garden had bodies which were not subject to death, but they were still subject to temptation, hence the Fall of man.

v39 "the powers of the earth could not hold them", probably referring to the subject of v. 19-22 as opposed to what we would think of as "the powers of the earth", such as gravity, time, spatial distance, etc. Mormon clearly didn't have our contemporary astrophysics in mind when writing.

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