

John 21

John 21:3 I go a fishing

Jeffrey R. Holland

Three years isn't long to call an entire Quorum of Twelve Apostles from a handful of new converts, purge from them the error of old ways, teach them the wonders of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then leave them to carry on the work until they too were killed. Quite a staggering prospect for a group of newly ordained elders.

Especially the part about being left alone. Repeatedly Jesus had tried to tell them He was *not* going to remain physically present with them, but they either could not or would not comprehend such a wrenching thought. Mark writes:

"He taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

"But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him."

Then, after such a short time to learn and even less time to prepare, the unthinkable happened, the unbelievable was true. Their Lord and Master, their Counselor and King, was crucified. His mortal ministry was over, and the struggling little Church He had established seemed doomed to scorn and destined for extinction. His Apostles did witness Him in His resurrected state, but that only added to their bewilderment. As they surely must have wondered, "What do we do now?" they turned for an answer to Peter, the senior Apostle.

Here I ask your indulgence as I take some nonscriptural liberty in my portrayal of this exchange. In effect, Peter said to his associates: "Brethren, it has been a glorious three years. None of us could have imagined such a few short months ago the miracles we have seen and the divinity we have enjoyed. We have talked with, prayed with, and labored with the very Son of God Himself. We have walked with Him and wept with Him, and on the night of that horrible ending, no one wept more bitterly than I. But that is over. He has finished His work, and He has risen from the tomb. He has worked out His salvation and ours. So you ask, 'What do we do now?' I don't know more to tell you than to return to your former life, rejoicing. I intend to 'go a fishing.'" And at least six of the ten other remaining Apostles said in agreement, "We also go with thee." John, who was one of them, writes, "They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately." (*Ensign*, November 2012, 83)

John 21:6 Cast the net on the right side of the ship

Neal A. Maxwell

"The Lord, who was able to say to his disciples, 'Cast the net on the right side of the ship,' knew beforehand there was a multitude of fishes there (John 21:6). If he knew beforehand the movements and whereabouts of fishes in the little Sea of Tiberias, should it offend us that he knows beforehand which mortals will come into the gospel net?" (Cory H. Maxwell, ed., *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 233.)

John 21:7 It is the Lord

Jeffrey R. Holland

But, alas, the fishing wasn't very good. Their first night back on the lake, they caught nothing-not a single fish. With the first rays of dawn, they disappointedly turned toward the shore, where they saw in the distance a figure who called out to them, "Children, have you caught anything?" Glumly these Apostles-turned-again-fishermen gave the answer no fisherman wants to give. "We have caught nothing," they muttered, and to add insult to injury, they were being called "children."

"Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find," the stranger calls out-and with those simple words, recognition begins to flood over them. Just three years earlier these very men had been fishing on this very sea. On that occasion too they had "toiled all the night, and [had] taken nothing," the scripture says. But a fellow Galilean on the shore had called out to them to let down their nets, and they drew "a great multitude of fishes," enough that their nets broke, the catch filling two boats so heavily they had begun to sink.

Now it was happening again. These "children," as they were rightly called, eagerly lowered their net, and "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

John said the obvious: "It is the Lord." And over the edge of the boat, the irrepressible Peter leaped. (*Ensign*, November 2012, 83-84)

John 21:9-13 they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread

Henry B. Eyring

"They found a fire of coals with fish cooking and bread. I have often wondered, as you may have done, who laid the fire, who caught the fish, and who cooked the meal, but it was the Master who prepared His disciples to be fed more than fish and bread. He let them eat first. And then He taught them of spiritual feeding. And He gave a commandment to them which still stands for each of us." ("Feed My Lambs," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 82)

Bruce R. McConkie

"When they came to shore they found a fire of coals with fish broiling and a supply of bread...Jesus then gave them bread and fish to eat, and although the account does not so state, he himself must also have eaten, for, as in the upper room, such would have been one of the main purposes of providing the food." (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-1981], 4: 289.)

John 21:15 Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?

Jeffrey R. Holland

After a joyful reunion with the resurrected Jesus, Peter had an exchange with the Savior that I consider the crucial turning point of the apostolic ministry generally and certainly for Peter personally, moving this great rock of a man to a majestic life of devoted service and leadership. Looking at their battered little boats, their frayed nets, and a stunning pile of 153 fish, Jesus said to His senior Apostle, "Peter, do you love me more than you love all this?" Peter said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

The Savior responds to that reply but continues to look into the eyes of His disciple and says again, "Peter, do you love me?" Undoubtedly confused a bit by the repetition of the question, the great fisherman answers a second time, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

The Savior again gives a brief response, but with relentless scrutiny He asks for the third time, "Peter, do you love me?" By now surely Peter is feeling truly uncomfortable. Perhaps there is in his heart the memory of only a few days earlier when he had been asked another question three times and he had answered equally emphatically-but in the negative. Or perhaps he began to wonder if he misunderstood the Master Teacher's question. Or perhaps he was searching his heart, seeking honest confirmation of the answer he had given so readily, almost automatically. Whatever his feelings, Peter said for the third time, "Lord, . . . thou knowest that I love thee."

To which Jesus responded (and here again I acknowledge my nonscriptural elaboration), perhaps saying something like: "Then Peter, why are you here? Why are we back on this same shore, by these same nets, having this same conversation? Wasn't it obvious then and isn't it obvious now that if I want fish, I can get fish? What I need, Peter, are disciples-and I need them forever. I need someone to feed my sheep and save my lambs. I need someone to preach my gospel and defend my faith. I need someone who loves me, truly, truly loves me, and loves what our Father in Heaven has commissioned me to do. Ours is not a feeble message. It is not a fleeting task. It is not hapless; it is not hopeless; it is not to be consigned to the ash heap of history. It is the work of Almighty God, and it is to change the world. So, Peter, for the second and presumably the last time, I am asking you to leave all this and to go teach and testify, labor and serve loyally until the day in which they will do to you exactly what they did to me."

Then, turning to all the Apostles, He might well have said something like: "Were you as foolhardy as the scribes and Pharisees? As Herod and Pilate? Did you, like they, think that this work could be killed simply by killing me? Did you, like they, think the cross and the nails and the tomb were the end of it all and each could blissfully go back to being whatever you were before? Children, did not my life and my love touch your hearts more deeply than this?" (*Ensign*, November 2012, 84)

John 21:15 Feed my lambs

James E. Faust

"Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated: 'Anyone serving in any capacity in the Church in which he is responsible for the spiritual or temporal well-being of any of the Lord's children is a shepherd to those sheep. The Lord holds his shepherds accountable for the safety [meaning the salvation] of his sheep.' The bearers of the priesthood have this great responsibility, whether they serve as father, grandfather, home teacher, elders quorum president, bishop, stake president, or in another Church calling.

"...When I was a very small boy, my father found a lamb all alone out in the desert. The herd of sheep to which its mother belonged had moved on, and somehow the lamb got separated from its mother, and the shepherd must not have known that the lamb was lost. Because it could not survive alone in the desert, my father picked it up and brought it home. To have left the lamb there would have meant certain death, either by falling prey to the coyotes or by starvation because it was so young that it still needed milk. Some shepherders call these lambs 'bummers.' My father gave the lamb to me and I became its shepherd.

"For several weeks I warmed cow's milk in a baby's bottle and fed the lamb. We became fast friends. I called him Nigh (I don't remember where I got the name). It began to grow. My lamb and I would play on the lawn. Sometimes we would lie together on the grass and I would lay my head on its soft, woolly side and look up at the blue sky and the white, billowing clouds. I did not lock my lamb up during the day. It would not run away. It soon learned to eat grass. I could call my lamb from anywhere in the yard by just imitating as best I could the bleating sound of a sheep: *Baa. Baa.*

"One night there came a terrible storm. I forgot to put my lamb in the barn that night as I should have done. I went to bed. My little friend was frightened in the storm, and I could hear it bleating. I knew that I should help my pet, but I wanted to stay safe, warm, and dry in my bed. I didn't get up as I should have done. The next morning I went out to find my lamb dead. A dog had also heard its bleating cry and killed it. My heart was broken. I had not been a good shepherd or steward of that which my father had entrusted to me. My father said, 'Son, couldn't I trust you to take care of just one lamb?' My father's remark hurt me even more than losing my woolly friend. I resolved that day, as a little boy, that I would try never again to neglect my stewardship as a shepherd if I was ever placed in that position again.

"Not too many years thereafter I was called as a junior companion to a home teacher. There were times when it was so cold or stormy that I

wanted to stay home and be comfortable, but in my mind's ear I could hear my little lamb bleating, and I knew I needed to be a good shepherd and go with my senior companion. In all the many intervening years, whenever I have had a desire to shirk my duties, there has come to me a remembrance of how sorry I was that night so many years ago when I had not been a good shepherd. I have not always done everything I should have, but I have tried." (*Finding Light in a Dark World* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1995], 125-126.)

Joanne B. Doxey

"Would we respond as Peter did when he was questioned about his priorities?

"My beloved sisters, my message to you this hour is one of love and encouragement, that we, as women, can demonstrate our love of the Lord through fulfilling our God-given responsibility to "feed his lambs" by bringing souls unto him and by strengthening the family both here and hereafter.

"It is a glorious thing to be a woman in these latter days. We, together with the priesthood, are to prepare a righteous generation for the second coming of Christ. We are led by a living prophet who counsels us to feed the lambs, enrich and protect the home, and strengthen the family.

"Why do you think the prophets are reminding us of our sacred duty to feed the lambs and protect the home and family? Because it is against the home and family that Satan has aimed his greatest efforts to destroy, and far too many sheep are wandering or being enticed away out of the sheep fold, and wolves lie in wait to devour the flock.

"How can we help prepare children for their significant role if we, their mentors, are absent or uncaring? It is an awesome task, but one filled with hope and happiness, if we make it so." ("Strengthening the Family," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 90)

David O. McKay

"'Feed my lambs.' Such was the divine injunction given by the Risen Lord to Peter, his chief Apostle, emphasizing the fact that the proper training of childhood is man's most important and sacred duty.

"Children at birth are the most dependent and helpless of all creatures, yet they are the sweetest and greatest of all things in the world. They come, or should come, from the Father pure and undefiled, without inherent taints or weakness. This is the responsibility of the parents. Their souls are as stainless white paper on which are to be written the aspirations or achievements of a lifetime. Whether that life's scroll shall become a biography of a noble, Christlike soul, or a series of blots and blemishes depends largely, if not entirely, upon guiding influences of parents, playmates, and teachers." (*Improvement Era*, 1949, Vol. Lii. December, 1949. No. 12)

John 21:16 Feed my sheep

M. Russell Ballard

"If we are obedient to the Savior's command given to Peter, we will focus our attention on the spiritual growth and development of those for whom we are responsible. Feeding the Lord's sheep requires each of us to awaken our interest in others. The duty to invite others to partake of the gospel feast does not rest only on the shoulders of the missionaries. That sober and significant duty belongs to each member of the Church, for 'it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor.'

"Today our prophet is calling for enthusiastic and dynamic love for our Heavenly Father's children. He asks us to see the spiritual hunger around us and to respond by willingly sharing our abundance. No power on earth can accomplish as much as one righteous man or woman or boy or girl." ("Feasting at the Lord's Table," *Ensign*, May 1996, 81)

Helvécio Martins

"...my first calling as a priesthood holder was not to serve as a General Authority, or a mission president, or a bishop, or as a member of two stake presidencies. It was not to serve as an executive secretary in the stake and in the ward. My first assignment and calling was that of serving as a home teacher. This calling preceded all the others. It is interestingly significant to think of it.

"Since then, I have considered this to be a most important and wonderful calling. In previous callings I have always been released, but this first stewardship has been kept untouched.

"There is no greater Church calling than that of a home teacher,' taught **President Ezra Taft Benson**. 'There is no greater Church service rendered to our Father in Heaven's children than the service rendered by a humble, dedicated, committed home teacher' (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 50).

"...This is the work or the stewardship of the home teacher: to feed, to nourish and quench the thirst of the sheep who are assigned to him as a shepherd. Nothing has been represented to have higher priority or more urgency in my ecclesiastical life, followed by the lives of my children, than the dedicated, loyal, and devoted fulfillment of this stewardship." ("Watchmen on the Tower," *Ensign*, May 1995, 43-44)

Ezra Taft Benson

"We realize, as in times past, some of the sheep will rebel and are 'as a wild flock which fleeth from the shepherd.' (Mosiah 8:21.) But most of our problems stem from lack of loving and attentive shepherding.

"With a shepherd's care, many of our new members, those newly born into the gospel, would be nurtured by gospel knowledge and new standards. Such attention would ensure that there would be no returning to old habits and old friends.

"With a shepherd's loving care, many of our young people, our young lambs, would not be wandering. And if they were, the crook of the shepherd's staff, a loving arm, would retrieve them.

"With a shepherd's care, many of those who are now independent of the flock can still be reclaimed. Many have married outside the Church and assumed the life-styles of their marriage partners.

"The problem, I repeat, is serious and considerable in its magnitude." ("A Call to the Priesthood: 'Feed My Sheep,' " *Ensign*, May 1983, 44)

Ezra Taft Benson

"There are no new solutions to this old problem of sheep straying elsewhere for food. The charge Jesus gave to Peter, which He emphasized by repeating it three times, is the proven solution: 'Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep.' (See John 21:15-17.)

"As in the glorious admonition of the Book of Mormon, those baptized into the church of Christ must be constantly 'remembered and nourished by the good word of God.' (Moro. 6:4.)

"The answer, then, is found in prayerfully shepherding and feeding the flock-in other words, personal watchcare. There must be real, heartfelt concern by a true and loving shepherd, not just the shallow concern that a hireling might show.

"As we discuss the concept of a true shepherd, we recognize that the Lord has given this responsibility to priesthood holders. But sisters also have callings of 'shepherding' in the charitable and loving service they render to one another, and to others. Thus, we must all learn to be true shepherds. We must manifest the same love to others that the Good Shepherd has for all of us. Each soul is precious to Him. His invitation beckons every member-every son and daughter of God." ("Feed My Sheep," *Ensign*, Sept. 1987, 4)

John 21:17 Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?

Peter has already answered the question twice. Still, the Lord persists-asking him yet a third time! The Lord knows all things. He knew that Peter loved him. So why did he ask him three times?

The Lord's interrogation is deliberate. The repetition of the question is intentional. Less than a few weeks prior, Peter had declared his devotion to the Master only to be told that he would deny him thrice (Matt. 26:33-35). As Peter fulfilled that prophecy, even denying Jesus with an oath, 'the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter' (Lu 22:61). That gaze must have sent chills through Peter's spine. That gaze must have communicated the Lord's great grief, to be denied only a few short hours after suffering for the sins of the world. Was Peter grieved to be asked three times? Maybe so, but can we compare that to the grief of the Master to be denied three times by his chief apostle?

And so, the Lord asks Peter three times to declare his love. Peter had denied him three times; the Lord would require his allegiance three times. What incredible attention to detail! While Jesus never needed to repent, he perfectly understands the process as the Author of Salvation. Accordingly, he helps Peter with the step of restitution. Peter would never deny him again. Neither would he go fishing when he should have been feeding the sheep.

Neal A. Maxwell

"Peter was given one of the greatest and yet most anguishing opportunities to learn in human history, when Jesus said in a moment of divine probing: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' To which Peter replied '. . . Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.' (John 21:15-17.) The thrice-repeated, thrusting irony of Jesus' questions must have burned deeply into the consciousness of Peter. But he learned from this experience and again rallied from reproof. In terms of the leader-follower situation, the courage and resilience which Peter displayed was possible because it occurred within a relationship in which the Master had conveyed clearly to Peter that he, the Christ, loved Peter; when reproof was called for, Peter, being sure of Christ's love, could endure the reproof and learn from it." (*A More Excellent Way: Essays on Leadership for Latter-day Saints*, 39-40)

Jeffrey R. Holland

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am not certain just what our experience will be on Judgment Day, but I will be very surprised if at some point in that conversation, God does not ask us exactly what Christ asked Peter: "Did you love me?" I think He will want to know if in our very mortal, very inadequate, and sometimes childish grasp of things, did we at least understand

one commandment, the first and greatest commandment of them all—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." (Luke 10:27) And if at such a moment we can stammer out, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," then He may remind us that the crowning characteristic of love is always loyalty.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments," Jesus said. So we have neighbors to bless, children to protect, the poor to lift up, and the truth to defend. We have wrongs to make right, truths to share, and good to do. In short, we have a life of devoted discipleship to give in demonstrating our love of the Lord. We can't quit and we can't go back...

To all within the sound of my voice, the voice of Christ comes ringing down through the halls of time, asking each one of us while there is time, "Do you love me?" And for every one of us, I answer with my honor and my soul, "Yea, Lord, we do love thee." And having set our "hand to the plough," we will never look back until this work is finished and love of God and neighbor rules the world. (*Ensign*, November 2012, 84-85)

John 21:18 when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not

"Wetstein observes that it was a custom at Rome to put the necks of those who were to be crucified into a yoke, and to *stretch out their hands* and fasten them to the end of it; and having thus led them through the city they were carried out to be crucified.... Thus then Peter was girded, chained, and carried *whither he would not*-not that he was unwilling to die for Christ; but he was a *man* -he did not *love death*; but he loved his *life less* than he loved his *God*....

"Ancient writers state that, about thirty-four years after this [After Jesus' prophecy], Peter was crucified; and that he deemed it so *glorious* a thing to die for Christ that he begged to be crucified with his *head downwards*, not considering himself worthy to die in the same posture in which his Lord did. So [wrote] *Eusebius, Prudentius, Chrysostom, and Augustin*. (*Clarke's*

Commentary, Matthew to Revelation [Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.], page 663.)

Bruce R. McConkie

"'Thou shalt follow me,' our Lord said to Peter on that recent day when the chief apostle pledged, 'I will lay down my life for thy sake.' (John 13:36-38.) How literally the Master then spoke, and how fully Peter is to do as he offered, he now learns. He is to be crucified, a thing which John in this passage assumes to be known to his readers. Peter's arms are to be stretched forth upon the cross, the executioner shall gird him with the loin-cloth which criminals wear when crucified, and he shall be carried where he would not, that is to his execution. (Pet. 1:14-15.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 1: 864.)

John 21:20-23 John the Revelator to tarry until the Second Coming

So many times the meaning of scriptures is obscure because we have only a partial record. Many of the difficult stories in the Old Testament would be much easier to understand if they were not so abbreviated. The interaction between John and the Lord is difficult to understand without the additional revelation given through Joseph Smith. The text should read as follows:

This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. (John 21:19)

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. (DC 7:1-3)

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*?

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me. (John 21:20-22)

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 desiredst that thou mightest speedily come unto me in my kingdom. I say unto 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 will 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. (DC 7:4-8)

Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. (John 21:23-24)

What is remarkable about this interaction is the personal and intimate conversation between John and the Savior. We now have record of Jesus' prophecy and counsel to Peter and his promise to John. We are left to wonder, since 'there are also many other things which Jesus did,' if he did not have a similar personal discussion with each of the other five disciples who were present on this occasion. Maybe he prophesied in a similar manner of their missions and martyrdoms.

John 21:22 what is that to thee? Follow thou me

Neal A. Maxwell

"While striving to walk the same straight and narrow path as other disciples, it is unwise for us to make comparisons. Peter questioned what John was to do. Jesus' rejoinder was, 'What is that to thee? Follow thou me.' (John 21:22.) We mortals do not have all the data even on ourselves, let alone on others. But God does. Having faith in Him includes faith in His purposes not only for ourselves but also for others. Only He who carried the great cross can fully compare crosses.

"The mother of James and John asked to have her sons sit later on Jesus' right and left hand. She was told, 'Ye know not what ye ask' (Matthew 20:21). It had already been decided. She had asked amiss, as we all sometimes do (James 4:3; 2 Nephi 4:35; 3 Nephi 18:20; D&C 88:64-65). Sometimes we ask amiss because of our provincialism; this cannot be cured instantly, but we can trust submissively." (*Not My Will, But Thine* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998], 96.)

John 21:22 The mission of John the Revelator

Joseph Fielding Smith

"The meaning of the words of the Lord: 'There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom,' (Matt. 16:28) was made clear when the Book of Mormon was being translated. There arose a difference of opinion between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as to whether John remained in the flesh or had died. They inquired of the Lord by Urim and Thummim and the answer was the revealing of the record made by John on parchment and hidden up by himself. This record is section seven of the Doctrine and Covenants. From this revelation the conversation between our Lord and Peter recorded in the twenty-first chapter of John (verses 18-24), is clarified, and we know that John was blessed with the privilege of remaining on the earth until the second coming of Christ. This also explains the words of the Savior regarding some remaining until he should come in his kingdom.

"This desire made by John was a noble one, for he desired to live, not that he might lengthen out his life in mortality, for that of itself would not have been a blessing, but that he might bring souls unto Christ. Peter's desire was a very natural one—to come to the Lord as soon as his mission was finished on the earth. John desired, because of his love of mankind, that he might do a greater work by laboring in this mortal world until Christ should come the second time, in the clouds of glory.

"When Jesus Christ visited the Nephites on this continent, he also chose twelve men and gave them authority similar to the authority of the Twelve at Jerusalem, that they might labor among their people in the Church and for the salvation of souls. Before he left them he granted their desires, as he had to Peter and John. Nine of the twelve chose the same blessing that Peter did, but three of them 'sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.' '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.' (See 3 Nephi 28:6)

"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.' (3 Nephi 28:5-7.)

"A great mission was given unto John because of his desire, and he is even now laboring as 'a flaming fire and a ministering angel, for those who are heirs of salvation.' In the tenth chapter of Revelation we read that John was given a little book by the angel and commanded to eat it up, which he did and he said, 'it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.' And the angel said by way of interpretation of this act: 'Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.' When this mission was given, John was an old man far beyond the allotted years of three score and ten. In answer to a question as to the meaning of this vision of the book, the Prophet **Joseph Smith** said: it was a mission and an ordinance for John to gather the tribes of Israel. (D&C 77:14.) At a conference of the Church, held June, 1831, Joseph Smith said: 'that John the Revelator was then among the ten tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion.' (Doc. Hist. of the Church, Vol. 1:176. Essentials in Church History, p. 126.)" (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1949], 1: 44-45.)

Joseph Smith

"John the Revelator [is] among the ten tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion, to again possess the land of their fathers." (Kent P. Jackson, comp. and ed., *Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], 142.)

John 21:22 The doctrine of Translation

Joseph Smith

"Now the doctrine of translation is a power which belongs to this Priesthood. There are many things which belong to the powers of the Priesthood and the keys thereof, that have been kept hid from before the

foundation of the world; they are hid from the wise and prudent to be revealed in the last times.

"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 fulness, 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...[The] 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 as to the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great a rest and glory." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 170-171.)

John 21:23 Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die

Translated beings belong to a terrestrial order. Therefore, a change must occur in order for them to be celestialized. This change may be referred to as a death. However, the individual does not "taste of death." Mormon explained the doctrine of translation as follows:

'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;

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.

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.

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.' (3 Ne. 28:37-40)

Bruce R. McConkie

"It is interesting to note that in the gospel account John specifies that he was promised that he should tarry until the Second Coming and not that he should escape death. From the account of the translation of the Three Nephite disciples we learn that this is exactly what takes place. A change is wrought in their bodies so they cannot die at this time, but when the Lord comes again they 'shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality,' and thus they 'shall never taste of death.' (3 Ne. 28:1-10, 36-40.) They will be like a person who lives during the millennium. Of such the revelation says: 'It is appointed to him to die at the age of man. Wherefore, children shall grow up until they become old; old men shall die; but they shall not sleep in the dust, but they shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye.' (D&C 63:50.) Thus they shall die, in the sense indicated, but they shall not 'taste of death.' In this respect it is profitable to note the language used by the Lord with reference to the death of the righteous: 'And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them.' (D&C 42:46.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 1: 865.)

Joseph Smith

"Translated bodies cannot enter into rest until they have undergone a change equivalent to death." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 191)

John 21:25 I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written

"...it is abundantly clear that the Bible does not contain all the words or deeds of Jesus. It is such a partial record that it is simply unthinkable to the reasonable mind that this sketchy record contains all his teachings, or that he never said anything new or worthwhile on those other days. John makes reference to this when he says: 'And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written' (John 21:25).

"In this connection one is reminded of Paul urging his friends from Ephesus 'to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). It is clear that Paul knew this as a particular statement by Jesus, yet nowhere in the four 'testimonies' is Jesus represented as saying that." (Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994], 24.)

David O. McKay

"We have his book (the New Testament); we have what the apostles remembered he said, but even that has not come to us in the language in which he spoke it (Aramaic). Even what we have is so little that it can be put in a vest pocket edition; and yet John tells us that if all he said and all he did were written, the world itself could scarcely contain the volumes. (See John 21:25.) In comparison to that, think how little we have, how little we know from a human standpoint.

"Yet, even from the human standpoint, no being has ever been on the earth that has wielded a thousandth part of the influence which this man of Nazareth wields throughout the world. Nearly two thousand years have gone, and he is still acknowledged as the one peerless person in the world.

"Today his life is a more potent factor in influencing humanity than it has ever been before, notwithstanding the terrible conditions that exist in the world today. What is this influence? It is not just what he has written.

"Thank heaven we do have a few of his words in the Bible, and that we have more of them in modern scripture, the Book of Mormon. But all told, this amounts to but little, even including the more glorious revelations, more direct words, in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is not just what he said, but rather *what he does to our spirits, how he influences our hearts and affects the very lives of men which makes him live*. It is through that power, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, that he influences the world, and gives men the power to bear testimony to his divinity. In that power, all men can read of his life and what he has done and can hear his voice through the *Whisperings* of the Spirit. All men should do as he has done; that is the obligation that comes to us." (*Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1967], 425-426.)