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The Lamanites (A Book of Mormon Sketch)

Author(s): George Reynolds

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Abstract: This series sketches out the character of the Lamanites. Reynolds also writes concerning Sariah, Lehi's wife. The fifth part covers the history of the Lamanites in the years leading up to the birth of Christ.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles; these are the beginnings of sorrows."—MARK xiii, 8.

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THE LAMANITES.—(A BOOK OF MORMON SKETCH.)

BY ELDER GEORGE REYNOLDS.

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The history of the Lamanites still continues a history of wars. In B.C. 53 they again raised a numerous army and went down against their traditional foes. The campaign was a short one. Moronihah, the son of Moroni, inflicted a signal blow upon their advancing legions, and drove them back to their own lands. The loss in this deservedly ill-fated expedition was great.

Still this blood-thirsty race never seemed to gain experience by the things they suffered. This no doubt arose to a great extent from the continued irritation kept up by the wily apostates, who had much private spleen to gratify in the sufferings of the Nephites, and who held no particular love or respect for their credulous dupes and catspaws, the Lamanites.

In the year B.C. 51, the Lamanite armies were commanded by a Nephite dissenter named Coriantumr. He was a descendant of Zarahemla, therefore, presumed, of the tribe of Judah. He determined on new and venture-

some tactics. He made a sudden dash down the centre of the Nephite territory, surprised and captured their capital city, and for the first time the savage soldiery of Laman held possession of the towers, temples and palaces of Zarahemla. Not content with this great triumph, Coriantumr pushed further north; his intention was to obtain possession of the narrow isthmus which was the key to both continents. In this he failed. The Nephite commanders first checked his progress northward, and then cut off his retreat. In a fierce battle that followed he was killed, his armies surrendered, and the remnants hastened ingloriously home, Moronihah magnanimously permitting them to return unmolested.

It is not until the year B.C. 38 that anything further of especial note is recorded regarding the Lamanites, but the hour of their most terrible triumph then drew near. It was an age when the Nephite church was weakened by iniquity, and the Commonwealth was rent by opposing factions; when the

defeated cliques, according to the old, old plan, went over to the king of the Lamanites and began to stir up strife. At first the fears of the people prevailed, and these breeders of contention were unsuccessful. But two years later, when other bands of the dissatisfied flowed southward, with loud repetitions of their asserted wrongs, the Lamanites took up their cause and prepared for war. The next year (B.C. 35) the invasion began. The distracted and sin-weakened citizens of Zarahemla were in no condition to withstand the tumultuous flow of the barbaric host. They crept backward from land to land until not only Zarahemla, but the whole southern continent to the isthmus was by Lamanite warriors held. In this war the Nephite dissenters took active part against their white brethren, and to this fact, in part, may be attributed the sudden successes that shone on the Lamanite arms. But little by little in succeeding years the half repentant Nephites regained their lost ground, until (B.C. 31) the most northerly half of their possessions had again fallen into their hands; but because of their only partial repentance, their leaders had not strength to lead them further.

A great change now illumines the history of the Lamanites. The Prophets Nephi and Lehi witnessing, with grief, the abounding sinfulness of the Nephites, were inspired to commence missionary labors. They commenced at the most northern regions of the southern continent, and from thence continued southward. Their success in bringing the Nephites to a realization of their melancholy condition was extremely gratifying to these lovers of the souls of men. Southward they still kept their journey to the city of Zarahemla, which was still in the hands of the Lamanites, and in the midst of this people and their apostate associates they lifted the Gospel banner. God was with them in their ministrations, He softened the hearts of their hearers and inclined them to accept the saving word. So great was the heavenly power that attended these holy men, that 8,000 Lamanites in the Land of Zarahemla, and the regions round about, were

convinced of the falsity of the traditions of their fathers and were baptized unto repentance.

From Zarahemla the prophets proceeded to the Lamanite capital in the Land of Nephi, where yet mightier power attended them. The voice of God from heaven sustained their testimony, angels ministered to the people who assembled to see them, neither prisons, nor chains, nor bonds could restrain or hold them, and they accomplished an ever blessed and marvelous work amongst the benighted children of Laman (B.C. 30). God's power was manifested at these times in mercy to the darkened condition of their minds, when only extraordinary manifestations of His Divine goodness could reach their hearts. They had no records to which they could appeal, and all their traditions were opposed to the Holy Being whose message of eternal joy the Nephite prophets bore. Thus in their weakness they were strengthened by signs and wonders to which a people better educated in the things of God could have no claim. Such had Moses and the prophets, and holy angels could bring them no message that they would more readily receive. The result of these glorious manifestations was, that the greater portion of the Lamanite race cast aside their idols, gave up the worship of the unknown "great spirit," and were converted to obedience to Gospel law, and henceforth they showed, in a marked degree, greater stability in the cause of righteousness than did their Nephite fellow-worshippers. They were not so given, as were the latter, to blow hot and blow cold, to be carried to and fro by every wind of false doctrine, and they remained steadfast in holy things, when often the Nephites were wallowing in apostasy.

The first great act of justice performed by the reformed (and now preponderating) Lamanites, was to restore to the Nephites Zarahemla and all the other lands they had wrested from them, thus showing that their conversion was sincere. They next sent missionaries to preach to the inhabitants of the Land of Zarahemla and the regions stretching into the far distant north. They labored with

great effect and abundant joy, and a universal peace, such as had never before been known since the division of the two races, extended over the whole land. Indeed, from this time the history of the two nations, to a great extent, becomes one. Together they worshiped the Lord, together they rose and sank, together they battled with the assassin hosts of Gadianton, together they triumphed over these desperadoes, and together they sought refuge in one vast body when there was no safety but in massing the people gathered in from every land; together the more unrighteous portions of both races were destroyed at the crucifixion of the Savior, and together the more righteous ones witnessed His appearing, listened to His words, received His law, and became members of His holy Church. Henceforth, for generations, there were no more of Nephi, no more of Laman, no more of Jacob, no more of Ishmael—all were of Christ.

But even before this blessed era the union had become so complete that it is recorded (A.D. 13) "that those Lamanites who united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites, and their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites, and their young men and their daughters became exceeding fair; and they were numbered among the Nephites, and were called Nephites" (480). It is also exceedingly happifying to know that the greater part of this race belonged to the Church of God, and even when complete apostasy darkened the annals of the Nephites, a few Lamanites were still found who remained faithful and true under every change of fortune and in every variety of circumstance. Those who remained in unbelief, who fraternized with the robbers, who continued in their filthy habits, were the more degraded and ignorant, who wandered in the forests and continued in the savageness of former generations. On the other hand the Gospel bore abundant fruit in the hearts of those who accepted its tidings of great joy, they became industrious, thrifty and enterprising, and, as far as can be learned from the record, rivalled the Nephites

in the arts of peace and civilization.

Many prophets were raised up in their midst, among whom we must draw attention to one named Samuel, who performed an important mission to Zarahemla (B. C. 6). He was marvelously blessed with the spirit of prophecy, and proclaimed, in striking detail, many of the events connected with the birth, life and death of the coming Messiah, as well as with regard to the future history of the descendants of Lehi. It will be quite in place to record here a few of his sayings concerning the Lamanites, as they throw much light on the dealings of God with this people. He says: "But behold my brethren, the Lamanites, hath he hated, because their deeds have been evil continually; and this because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers. But behold, salvation hath come unto them, through the preaching of the Nephites; and for this intent hath the Lord prolonged their days. And I would that ye should behold that the more part of them are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments according to the law of Moses.

"Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and they are striving with unwearied diligence, that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth; therefore there are many who do add to their numbers daily. And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy Scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them; therefore as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves, are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.

"And ye know also that they have buried their weapons of war, and they

fear to take them up, lest by any means they should sin; yea, ye can see that they fear to sin; for behold they will suffer themselves that they be trodden down and slain by their enemies, and will not lift their swords against them; and this because of their faith in Christ. And now because of their steadfastness when they do believe in that thing which

they do believe; for because of their firmness when they are once enlightened, behold the Lord shall bless them and prolong their days notwithstanding their iniquities; yea, even if they should dwindle in unbelief, the Lord shall prolong their days until the time shall come which hath been spoken of by our fathers" (471—2).

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

MINUTES OF THE GLASGOW CONFERENCE,

HELD AT 8, WATSON STREET, GALLOWGATE, GLASGOW, ON SUNDAY,

JUNE 27TH, 1880.

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Elders present from Utah,—Wm. Budge, President of the European Mission; Hugh Findlay, President of, and David C. Dunbar, his successor; Hugh Watson, Thomas Jack, W. C. McGregor and James Low, traveling elders in the Glasgow Conference; Andrew Ferguson, President of, James Finlayson and A. M. Buchanan, traveling elders in the Dundee Conference; also, Erastus B. Snow and Moroni Snow, the former of Sheffield and the latter of Nottingham Conference.

11 a.m.

Singing. Prayer by Elder Ferguson. Singing.

Elder Findlay called on the presidents of branches to report.

Elder Gray represented the Glasgow Branch. He could not report it so favorably as he could wish. Some of the priesthood were alive to their duties, and were united in their efforts to spread the Gospel and went heart and soul into the tract distribution and other things required of them, while others were slow in these matters. They did not see much fruit resulting from this labor but felt encouraged to go on in the work, believing that they would do much good yet in this city.

Elder Wilson reported the Parkhead Branch. He said the Saints felt well, being united and attending to their duties, although some felt sleepy and discouraged in consequence of the death of their late president. It was their aim to fish out the honest in

heart among the people and let them know the principles of the Gospel. They held weekly meetings and distributed the tracts as far as they could with that end in view.

Elder Cunningham reported the Irvine Branch. He said the priesthood there were alive to their duties. The written word was freely distributed. A good deal of open-air preaching had been done and they desired to carry out the instructions of the priesthood, as far as lay in their power.

Elder Hartley reported the Kilwinning Branch. He said the Saints in that district were very much scattered, yet the brethren were living up to their duties. They had held several outdoor meetings, and were doing their utmost to make the Gospel known in that locality.

Elder Houston reported the Galston and Kilmarnock Branches. He said the Kilmarnock Saints were also far scattered, but were united as a body and were doing all they could to spread the principles of the Gospel. They had several names for baptism. There was only one lukewarm member amongst them, the others being actively engaged in the good work. They were also united in Galston and doing the best they knew how, looking for an increase to their numbers.

Elder Jack reported the Hamilton, Haywood and Lanark Branches. He said the Saints in these branches felt well and carried out the instructions of the priesthood, according to the