

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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LAMAN

Laman was the eldest of six sons of LEHI and Sariah. Lehi was the patriarchal head and prophet at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, and Laman opposed his father and his younger brother NEPHI₁. Unlike the family conflicts in the book of Genesis between Esau and Jacob and between Joseph and his jealous brothers, the hostilities between Laman and Nephi were never quieted or reconciled.

Laman's opposition to the things of God arose from a combination of conflicting spiritual values and a common reaction against the favor he perceived going to a younger brother. The record of Nephi portrays Laman as strong-willed, hard-hearted, impulsive, violent, judgmental, and lacking in faith. Though Laman followed his father in their journeyings, he never shared in the spiritual calling that inspired Lehi.

In his rebelliousness, Laman charged that Lehi was a visionary and foolish man (1 Ne. 2:11). Still Lehi continued to exhort him "with all the feeling of a tender parent," even though he feared from what he had seen in a vision that Laman and Lemuel would refuse to come into God's presence (1 Ne. 8:36-37).

Laman objected to leaving Jerusalem and the family's lands, possessions, and security, and to traveling to a new land (1 Ne. 2:11). Throughout

their journey he complained of the hardships and was resentful that God had selected Nephi to become "a ruler and a teacher" ahead of him (1 Ne. 2:21-22; 16:36-38). Laman and Lemuel beat Nephi with a rod (1 Ne. 3:28), attempted to leave him tied up in the wilderness to die (1 Ne. 7:16), bound him on board ship, and treated him harshly (1 Ne. 18:11). On various occasions, Laman was rebuked by an angel, chastened by the voice of the Lord, or "shocked" by divine power. Still, he longed for the popular life of Jerusalem even though Lehi had prophesied the city would be destroyed.

Laman was supported in his stance by his wife and children, by Lemuel (the next eldest son) and his family, and by some of the sons of ISHMAEL and their families. Before he died, Lehi left his first blessing with Laman and Lemuel on the condition that they would "hearken unto the voice of Nephi" (2 Ne. 1:28-29), but they so opposed Nephi that he was instructed by God to lead the faithful to settle a new land away from Laman and Lemuel in order to preserve their lives and religious beliefs.

Laman and his followers became the LAMANITES, persistent enemies of the NEPHITES. Stemming from these early personal conflicts, the Lamanites insisted for many generations that Nephi had deprived them of their rights. Thus, the Lamanites taught their children "that they should hate [the Nephites] . . . and do all they could to

destroy them” (Mosiah 10:17). When Laman’s descendants were converted to faith in Christ, however, they were exemplary in righteousness; and Book of Mormon prophets foretold a noteworthy future for them in the latter days.

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ALAN K. PARRISH

LAMANITE MISSION OF 1830–1831

The mission to western Missouri in 1830–1831 was important for three reasons: it demonstrated the Church’s commitment to preach to the descendants of the LAMANITES of the Book of Mormon; it helped establish a stronghold for the Church in KIRTLAND, OHIO, where the missionaries found numerous unexpected converts; and it ultimately brought Joseph SMITH to Jackson County, Missouri, to lay the foundation of ZION, or the NEW JERUSALEM.

This mission, one of the Church’s earliest missionary expeditions, commenced in October 1830 in New York State with the call of Oliver COWDERY, “second elder” in the Church; Peter Whitmer, Jr.; Parley P. PRATT; and Ziba Peterson (D&C 28:8; 32:1–3). It initiated the long continuing Church practice of taking the gospel to NATIVE AMERICANS. The Book of Mormon, in part a record of the Lamanite Indian origins, prophesies that the Lamanites will assist in building the millennial New Jerusalem (3 Ne. 20–21), to be located in the Western Hemisphere (Ether 13:3–6; cf. D&C 28:9).

In the early 1800s the U.S. government began removing eastern Indians to the American frontier west of all existing states. In May 1830 the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Law, further ensuring that the missionaries’ ultimate destination was just west of Independence, Missouri, the last American outpost before “Indian country.” To arrive there, the elders traveled on foot from New York, a distance of fifteen hundred miles, in mid-winter.

These brethren soon found audiences of white settlers and some Indians. First, at nearby Buffalo,

New York, they taught the Catteraugus Indians, who accepted two copies of the Book of Mormon. In northeastern Ohio they preached widely, and their message excited public curiosity. While visiting Mentor, Ohio, Cowdery and Pratt contacted Sidney RIGDON, a dynamic Reformed Baptist minister who was promoting New Testament restorationist beliefs in his congregation and was Pratt’s friend and former pastor. They challenged Rigdon to read the Book of Mormon, which he promised to do. Rigdon also allowed the elders to speak in his Mentor church and to his congregation in Kirtland. Positive response to their message was almost immediate. Many members of the congregation, including Rigdon, were baptized. News of their success spread rapidly, sparking intense public feelings and leading to more conversions.

In four weeks in northeastern Ohio, the elders baptized approximately 130 converts, 50 of them from Kirtland. These new members made Kirtland their headquarters. Among the converts were men who would become leaders in the Church: Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, Lyman Wight, Newel K. Whitney, Levi Hancock, and John Murdock. Two other prominent men, Edward Partridge and Orson HYDE, joined the Church soon after the missionaries departed. By the end of 1830, membership in Ohio had reached 300, nearly triple the number of members in New York. In December, after learning of the great Ohio harvest, Joseph Smith received a revelation directing the New York Saints to gather to the Kirtland area (D&C 37:1, 3), which most did in 1831.

Joined by Frederick G. Williams, a Kirtland physician, the four missionaries continued west in late November 1830, preaching as they traveled. They visited the Wyandot Indians at Sandusky, Ohio, where their hearers rejoiced over their message. However, during several days at Cincinnati, they were unable to interest other audiences. In late December, the elders took passage down the Ohio River toward St. Louis until encountering ice near Cairo, Illinois, which forced them to walk overland. Thereafter, their journey became increasingly arduous. Because of storms of rare severity, the winter of 1830–1831 is referred to in midwestern annals as “the winter of the deep snow.” Food was scarce, and the missionaries were forced to survive on meager rations of frozen bread and pork.

In late January 1831, still in the midst of intense cold, the missionaries arrived at Jackson