

“Amasa Mason Lyman”

How far will the Lord’s mercies reach for the repentant? I think you and I would be shocked if we knew.

Two missionaries came into the small New Hampshire community of Lyman. Living there was young Amasa Mason Lyman, 19 years old, who had been searching earnestly for the truth. Upon hearing the sure testimonies of Elders Orson Pratt and Lyman E. Johnson, he was converted and baptized April 27, 1832. He was immediately rejected by his family. He determined to join the saints in Ohio some 700 miles away—his greatest desire being to meet Joseph Smith. It was July 1, 1832, when Amasa Mason Lyman first met Joseph Smith, the Prophet. As they shook hands for the first time, Amasa later recalled, “I felt as one of old in the presence of the Lord. My strength seemed to be gone, so that it required an effort on my part to stand on my feet...and the still small voice of the Spirit whispered its testimony in the depths of my soul, where it has ever remained that he, Joseph Smith, was a man of God.”



Shortly after that, Amasa was called as a missionary—again and again and again he was called, serving ten missions in ten years. He was a member of Zion’s Camp, and later one of those standing with Joseph when a Missouri militia general ordered them all to be taken to the public square and shot the next morning. After much devoted service, Amasa was called as an apostle and, in Nauvoo, as a counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Upon Joseph’s death, it was Amasa who stood with Brigham Young and the Twelve, instead of his fellow counselor Sidney Rigdon, and influenced all the saints to follow Brigham and the Twelve.



Amasa was a full participant in the events of the Great Mormon Exodus of Nauvoo in 1846, and the subsequent colonization of the west. He did so much, for so many, for so long. Then in the 1860’s there began to be problems. Inexplicably, the man who had been so valiant and devoted so much of his time and life, began to teach strange doctrines, and manifest an attitude of rebellion. His brethren, and the Twelve, were patient and attempted reconciliation, but finally when Amasa stubbornly would not relent and would not repent, he was excommunicated from the Church

in 1870. He died February 4, 1877 in Fillmore, Utah, not a member of the Church. An apostle who became an apostate.

As we mortals tend to judge matters, that's a terrible story with a tragic ending. Amasa's story was a terrible tragedy. He had done so much good, and after all of that virtually to stumble at the finish line--- If it ended there it would be a terrible story.

However, the story does not end there. There is more. Sometime in 1908, one of Amasa's daughters experienced a dream in which she saw her father, dressed in black, and standing across the wide gulf of a river. Martha tried to go to him, but she could not. He told her he was tired of wearing black, that he missed his family, and then he said, "Go tell Francis. He's the only one who can help me." Francis was Amasa's son and the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

When Martha's dream was related to Church President Joseph F. Smith, he said, "It sounds to me like your father has suffered long enough. We'll see what we can do."

Subsequently, on January 12, 1909, Francis Marion Lyman was baptized by proxy on behalf of his father, and President Joseph F. Smith laid his hands upon him and confirmed him a member of the Church and restored all of Amasa's former blessings—his priesthood, his apostleship, his sealings.

It was Elder Orson F. Whitney who wrote, "Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain."



Source: *Amasa Mason Lyman: A Labor of Love*, by History of the Saints, 2013

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