

The Law of Moses

And the Intent for which it was Given

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The Law of Moses

Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long suffering, the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come, as though he already was.

Jarom 1:24-25

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood subjects in all of Scripture is the law of Moses. Throughout this work we have presented the following Scripture from Malachi, chapter three, to the reader, “For I am the Lord, I change not.”¹ We have also read the Lord say, “Wherefore, verily I say unto you, that all things unto me are *spiritual*, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal, neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam your father, whom I created; behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but *no temporal* commandment gave I unto him; for my commandments are *spiritual*; they are not natural, nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.”² However, there is a perception among many people that these two Scriptures run contrary to the law of Moses, for God Himself told Moses, “I will give unto them [Israel] the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment.”³ Additionally, some individuals might ask, “If God does not change, then why did He give the children of Israel a different commandment?”

Before answering the questions above, it is imperative for the reader to understand that there are a few fundamental truths or principles which apply when studying the Scriptures. Firstly, as stated already, God does not change, neither is there a shadow of changing in Him [read Malachi 3:6, James 1:17, Mormon 4:68-83, and DC 2:1]. Secondly, God’s word cannot return to Him void [read Genesis 3:30, Galatians 6:7, Alma 9:44-46, Alma 19:84-87, and DC 1:8]. Thirdly, the word of God is both eternal and subject to the truth, meaning that just as God cannot change, neither does His word change [read 1 Corinthians 14:32-33, 2 Nephi 6:38, Alma 19:71, Moroni 10:24-26, and DC 125:15e]. Finally, Jesus Christ defined truth as the “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and whatsoever is more or less than this, is the spirit of that wicked one, who was a liar from the beginning. The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth.”⁴

The Desires of our Heart

We have presented these four principles of study to the reader because occasionally there are instances in which God does appear to change, such as with the law of Moses. However, because we know this to be impossible, “For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and in him there

¹ Malachi 3:6

² DC 28:9

³ Exodus 34:2

⁴ DC 90:4b-c

is no variableness neither shadow of changing,⁵” there must be another explanation. If not so, then all four principles would be violated, making God a liar and His word to none effect. Remember that God “changeth not; if so, he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God.”⁶

Another fundamental truth which will help us to answer the two questions above is simply that God has given mankind the gift of agency so that we might be agents to ourselves and to act according to our own will. Therefore, we know that God cannot and will not violate our agency. If He did so then He would violate all four of the essential principles and would cease to be God, and yet we know that He is God and thus He will never take away our ability to choose. [Read more on our gift of agency in Chapter Thirteen]. Please read the following Scriptures from Psalms 37:4 and Alma 15:55-56:

37:4 Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee **the desires of thine heart**.

15:55 I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men **according to their desire**, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them **decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills**; whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction; **15:56** Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men; or he that knoweth not good from evil **is blameless**; but he that knoweth good and evil, **to him it is given according to his desires**; whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience.

From the foundation of the earth God has decreed, “I am the Beginning and the End; the Almighty God. By mine Only Begotten I created these things...And in the garden of Eden gave I unto man his agency; and unto thy brethren have I said, and also gave commandment, that they should love one another; and that they should choose me their Father.”⁷ In other words, God has decreed to the children of men from the very beginning that He is God and that it is His desire for mankind to love both Him and each other, which as Jesus told the Pharisees, is the greatest commandment.

The Lord has also shown mankind from the foundation of the world the way in which we might receive eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ, for God told Adam following his transgression in the garden, “If thou wilt, turn unto me and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask it shall be given you...Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying, that by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death; and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so become of dust a living soul; Even so ye must be born again, into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten;

⁵ Mormon 4:68

⁶ Mormon 4:82

⁷ Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 7:40

that ye may be sanctified from all sin; and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come; even immortal glory.⁸

Through the Scriptures, we see that the great commandment to love God with all our heart, might, and soul and to love our neighbor as ourselves is just as true today as it was in the days of Adam. Additionally, the commandment to repent and to be spiritual born into the Kingdom of God by the water, the Spirit, and the blood is the only way whereby salvation can come to the children of men. These decrees are unalterable and have stood firm from the foundation of the earth. Moreover, we know that because of Adam's transgression, we have all become free to choose and to act for ourselves. Hence, we can either accept God and His commandments, or we can reject them according to our own will. Please read the following Scripture from 2 Nephi 1:115-121:

1:115 Adam fell, that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. **1:116** And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. **1:117** And because that they are redeemed from the fall, they have become free for ever, knowing good from evil; **1:118** To act for themselves, and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the Lord, at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

1:119 Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. **1:120** And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil: **1:121** For he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

From these Scriptures we have essentially learned that while God does not change, He has always given us the opportunity to choose against Him according to the desires of our heart. Therefore, God has given mankind a commandment from the beginning to repent and be baptized unto repentance in the name of Jesus Christ so that we might be spiritually born of God into His everlasting Kingdom. Nonetheless, the Lord has established an unalterable decree that He will give us the desires of our heart "whether it be unto death or unto life." For an example, if we desire a lie over the truth, God is bound by His never changing word to give us a lie. In Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians, he wrote, "Yea, the Lord, even Jesus, whose coming is not until after there cometh a falling away, by the working of Satan with all power, and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they *received not* the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them *strong delusion*, that they should believe a lie."⁹ Please read from Jacob 3:22-25:

3:22 But behold, the Jews were a stiff-necked people; and they **despised** the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. **3:23** Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs

⁸ Genesis 6:53 and 61-62

⁹ 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11

fall: **3:24** For God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they can not understand, **because they desired it.** **3:25** And because they desired it, **God hath done it,** that they may stumble.

The Law added because of the Desire of their Heart

Following the children of Israel's exodus from the land of Egypt, the Lord called on Moses to gather Israel together that He might speak with them from the top of Mount Sinai. After the Lord descended in a midst of fire upon the mountain, the people became sore afraid and told Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it."¹⁰

In response to the peoples' words, God told Moses, "I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken. Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever! Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, *which thou shalt teach them*, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, *that ye may live*, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."¹¹

Does the reader believe that the Lord did not know the hearts of the people when they said, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it?" For God said that the people spoke well, however, He also said, "Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep my commandments always." In other words, as the Lord told Isaiah, "Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts *far from me*, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men."¹²

Therefore, as Moses was communing with God on top of the mount for forty days and nights, we read that the peoples' hearts were "set on mischief" instead of waiting patiently on the Lord, and they asked Aaron to "make us gods, which shall go before us; for as this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him."¹³ Rather than stand fast on the promise of a greater commandment, the children of Israel desired a delusion, "And because they desired it, God hath done it, that they may stumble." Thus, "the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them...I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 5:27

¹¹ Deuteronomy 5:28-33

¹² Isaiah 29:26

¹³ Exodus 32:22-23

people.¹⁴ “And it came to pass, as soon as he [Moses] came nigh unto camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing; and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.¹⁵”

In Exodus, chapter thirty-four, and Deuteronomy, chapter ten, we read that the first tables which Moses broke on the mount contained a greater spiritual law, which included the everlasting covenant [read Genesis 9:21-23], the higher priesthood, and the higher ordinances. Unfortunately, because of the hardness of their hearts and because of their stiff-neckedness this greater law was taken from the Israelites at this time and without this spiritual law the full presence of God could not be in the midst of the people. Please read from Exodus 34:1-2, Deuteronomy 10:1-2:

34:1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two other tables of stone, like unto the first, and I will write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but **it shall not be according to the first**, for I will take away the priesthood out of their midst; therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, **shall not go before them**; for my presence shall not go up in their midst, **lest I destroy them**. **34:2** But I will give unto them the law **as at the first**, but it shall be **after** the law of a carnal commandment; for I have sworn in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my presence, into my rest, in the days of their pilgrimage. Therefore do as I have commanded thee, and be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me, in the top of the mount.

10:1 At that time the Lord said unto me, Hew thee two other tables of stone **like unto the first**, and come up unto me upon the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. **10:2** And I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest, **save the words of the everlasting covenant of the holy priesthood**, and thou shalt put them in the ark.

In harmony with the four principles mentioned above, these Scriptures have explained that God presented Himself before Israel, just as He did with Adam, and decreed both that He is God and promised them a higher spiritual law so that they might live and prolong their days in the land of their inheritance. Although the people promised God that they would both hear and keep His commandments, this was not the desire of their heart, but instead they desired gods constructed by the hands of men. Therefore, instead of receiving the higher ordinances and priesthood, the children of Israel received the law of Moses, which was not given to Israel because God changed, but rather the law was given because they desired a delusion over the truth. In particular, that truth was simply that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that the only way whereby salvation shall come to the children of men is through His name.

In short, the Lord God cannot go against His word, as His word cannot return unto Him void nor can it be altered. Hence, as God has promised to give mankind what we want, the Lord gave the people of Israel what they wanted, which was a lie. It is important to understand that God does this because He is a God

¹⁴ Exodus 32:7-9

¹⁵ Exodus 32:19

of love. He does not desire to force His will upon mankind if we do not desire to know it or to keep it. Likewise, even the lie itself can be a part of God's merciful plan, because as Jesus said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom the Lord has committed much, of him will men ask the more."¹⁶ Moreover, the Lord does not send just any delusion, but as He told Isaiah, "I also will choose their delusions,"¹⁷ and this He does so that those who seek for truth might find it.

Paul wrote in the third chapter of Galatians, "Wherefore then, the law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made in the law given to Moses, who was ordained by the hand of angels to be a mediator of this first covenant, (the law.) Now this mediator was not a mediator of the new covenant; but there is one mediator of the new covenant, who is Christ, as it is written in the law concerning the promises made to Abraham and his seed. Now Christ is the mediator of life; for this is the promise which God made unto Abraham. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster until Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."¹⁸

Of course, the new covenant which Paul wrote of is not actually a new covenant, but rather it is that same covenant which was given from the beginning as John wrote in his first epistle. "Brethren, I write a *new commandment* unto you, but it is the *same* commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a *new commandment* I write unto you, which thing was of old ordained of God; and is true in him, and in you; because the darkness is past in you, and the true light now shineth."¹⁹ We hope that the reader has learned that God does not change, that His word cannot return unto Him void, that His word is eternal, and that His truth is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and because we know that these four principles are true, the law of Moses had to be given because it was the peoples' desire. Remember, the Lord will never violate our agency and He will always give us what we want, even if it means that we do not choose Him, and this because of His great and eternal love for His creation. "Yea, I know that he [God] alloteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills; whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction."²⁰

The Law after a Carnal Commandment

As we have discussed, instead of receiving the higher priesthood and ordinances, the children of Israel desired a delusion. Specifically, the people desired a commandment after the precepts of men similar to the various ceremonial rites which they witnessed in Egypt, which was a land of many false idols and

¹⁶ Luke 12:57

¹⁷ Isaiah 66:4

¹⁸ Galatians 3:19-25

¹⁹ 1 John 2:7-8

²⁰ Alma 15:55

gods. Therefore, God told Moses, “I will give unto them the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment,²¹” meaning that just as He gave Moses the greater spiritual law, the Lord would also give them the second law, which was added because of their transgressions and because of the desire of their hearts. In this sense, because the law of Moses was given to the people from God and not by carnal man, the law of was after, or in other words in imitation of, a carnal commandment.

It is important to remember that neither God nor His word can change, and Jesus Christ told the latter day saints, “Wherefore, verily I say unto you, that all things unto me are *spiritual*, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal, neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam your father, whom I created; behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but *no temporal* commandment gave I unto him; for my commandments are *spiritual*; they are not natural, nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.²²” Although the law of Moses was in the imitation or likeness of a carnal commandment, it was given directly to the children of Israel from God for a specific purpose, which was to lead them to the truth of the Holy Messiah and to be a shadow of better promises. Please read Paul’s dissertation on the law of Moses and its purpose from Hebrews 9:6-28 and Hebrews 10:1-22:

9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. **9:7** But into the second [veil, also known as the most holy place] went the high priest alone once every year, **not without blood**, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people; **9:8** The Holy Ghost signifying this that the way into the holiest of all was **not yet made manifest**, while as yet the first tabernacle [representing the law of Moses] was standing; **9:9** Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service **perfect**, as pertaining to the conscience; **9:10** Which consisted only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and **carnal ordinances**, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

9:11 But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, **by a greater and more perfect tabernacle**, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; **9:12** Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained **eternal redemption for us**. **9:13** For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; **9:14** How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

9:15 And for this cause **he is the mediator of the new covenant**, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. **9:16** For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the victim. **9:17** For a covenant is of force after the victim is dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the victim liveth.

²¹ Exodus 34:2

²² DC 28:9

9:18 Whereupon neither the first covenant was dedicated **without blood**. **9:19** For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, **9:20** Saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you. **9:21** Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. **9:22** And almost all things are by the law **purged with blood**; and without shedding of blood **is no remission**.

9:23 It was therefore necessary that the ***patterns of things in the heavens*** should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves **with better sacrifices** than these. **9:24** For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; **9:25** Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; **9:26** For then must he **often have suffered since the foundation of the world**; but now **once** in the meridian of time hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; **9:28** So Christ was **once offered to bear the sins of many**; and he shall appear the second time, without sin unto salvation unto them that look for him.

10:1 For the law having **a shadow** of good things to come, and **not the very image** of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered continually year by year make the comers thereunto **perfect**. **10:2** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had **no more conscience of sins**. **10:3** But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins **every year**. **10:4** For **it is not possible** that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

10:5 Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; **10:6** In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had **no pleasure**. **10:7** Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; **10:9** Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may **establish the second**. **10:10** By which will we are sanctified through the offering once of the body of Jesus Christ.

10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which **can never take away sins**; **10:12** But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice** for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; **10:13** From henceforth to reign until his enemies be made his footstool. **10:14** For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, **10:16** This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; **10:17** And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

10:18 Now where remission of these is, there is **no more offering for sin**. **10:19** Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest **by the blood of Jesus**, **10:20** By a **new and living way**, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; **10:21** And having such an high priest over the house of God; **10:22** Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Paul explained that the law of Moses was given after the pattern of heavenly things and that our salvation and redemption can only come through the blood of Jesus Christ, who is the mediator of the new covenant, which covenant has been ordained by God from the foundation of the world. Thus, the various blood offerings and sacrifices were a type and shadow of the atoning blood of Christ, for we read in Leviticus, chapter seventeen, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is *the blood* that maketh an *atonement* for the soul.”²³ From these Scriptures, we have learned that God has never given mankind a carnal commandment, but rather that He did give Israel a law in the imitation of a carnal commandment because they desired it, “And because they desired it, *God hath done it*, that they may stumble.”²⁴

The Law of Moses Altered by Men

Perhaps the biggest misperception concerning the law of Moses is that it only contained the Ten Commandments. Nevertheless, the Ten Commandments, which are found in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, are only a small fraction of the law. In fact, if the reader will carefully read over the Ten Commandments, he or she will notice that an individual can keep all of these commandments without truly loving God. However, it is important to understand that the two great commandments to love God and to love each other were given to the children of Israel just as they were given to Adam. Please read from Deuteronomy 6:4-6 and Leviticus 19:18:

6:4 Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; **6:5** And thou shalt **love the Lord thy God** with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. **6:6** And these words which I command thee this day, **shall be in thine heart**;

19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou **shalt love thy neighbor as thyself**; I am the Lord.

Conceivably, the most important portion of the law of Moses is what is known as the law of Jubilee, which is found in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus. The law of Jubilee was a time of redemption and restoration that was to occur every fifty years. In the law, Israel was commanded to restore each person

²³ Leviticus 17:11

²⁴ Jacob 3:25

to his possessions and to grant redemption for the land. “And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you; ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you; ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession.²⁵” It is imperative to understand that this part of the law of Moses could only be kept if the people had the true love of God in their hearts, and if they had the true love of God, then they would have understood that redemption only comes through Jesus Christ.

In study, we learn that the foundation of the law of Moses was the two great commandments, the Ten Commandments, and the law of Jubilee. Nevertheless, it appears that God suffered other commandments to be added because the precepts and desires of men. For example, when the Pharisees asked Jesus why Moses allowed for divorcement, the Master said, “Moses, because of the *hardness of your hearts*, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning *it was not so*.²⁶” Again we witness that God grants unto the children of men according to their desires, and even though God commanded Israel, saying, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you,” mankind has the ability to choose and to act according their own will. Thus, when God gives a decree or a commandment, we can keep it, we can reject it, or we can, even to our utter destruction, change it to our hearts desire. The Lord told Hosea, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee.”²⁷

For many people, the law of Moses is often associated with various sacrifices, offerings, and incense. However, as we read through the words of the prophets, it becomes very clear that God never wanted those things. Instead, what God desired was a broken heart and contrite spirit. What God desired were a people who would obey His voice and be His people, just as Samuel told King Saul, saying, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, *to obey is better than sacrifice*, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”²⁸ Please read the words of the prophets from the following Isaiah 1:11-15, Isaiah 65:1-5, Isaiah 66:1-4, Jeremiah 7:21-26, Psalms 40:6-8, and Psalms 51:16-17:

1:11 To *what purpose* is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord; *I am full* of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and *I delight not* in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. **1:12** When ye come to appear before me, *who hath required this at your hand*, to tread my courts? **1:13** Bring **no more** vain oblations; incense is an *abomination* unto

²⁵ Leviticus 25:10-13

²⁶ Matthew 19:7-8

²⁷ Hosea 4:6

²⁸ 1 Samuel 15:22-23

me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; **it is iniquity**, even the solemn meeting. **1:14** Your new moons and your appointed feasts **my soul hateth**; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. **1:15** And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; **your hand are full of blood**.

65:1 I am found of them **who seek after me**, I give unto all them that ask of me; I am not found of them that **sought me not**, or that inquireth not after me. **65:2** I said unto my servant, Behold me, look upon me; I will send you unto a nation that is not called after my name, for I have spread out my hands all the day to a people **who walketh not in my ways**, and their works are evil and not good, and they walk after their own thoughts. **65:3** A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; **65:4** Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable beasts, and pollute their vessels; **65:5** Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. **These are a smoke in my nose**, a fire that burneth all the day.

7:21 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. **7:22** For **I spake not** unto your fathers, **nor commanded them** in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; **7:23** But this thing commanded I them, saying, **Obey my voice**, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

40:6 Sacrifice and offering thou **didst not desire**; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou **not required**. **40:7** Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me. **40:8** I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, **thy law is within my heart**.

51:16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. **51:17** The sacrifices of God are **a broken spirit**; **a broken and a contrite heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Throughout the Old Testament, we read that God did not desire sacrifices and burnt offerings, but instead He desired a people who would hearken to His voice and who would keep His commandments to love both Him and one another with all their heart, soul, and might. This is the same commandment that was given from the beginning, and it is the same commandment that we have today. Thus, we see that God is unchangeable and is one eternal round. The law of Moses was given to Israel because they were not prepared to receive something greater. However, rather than condemn them, we should ask ourselves, "Are we any different?"

The Law was Fulfilled in Christ

Another misperception of the law of Moses is that it is directly connected with the prophets. While the prophets of the Old Testament often ministered during the time that the law was in effect, their

prophecies are not a part of the law, but rather they are completely separate. Jesus told the disciples, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, *or the prophets*; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, heaven and earth must pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so to do, he shall in no wise be saved in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach these commandments of the law until it be fulfilled, the same shall be called great, and shall be saved in the kingdom of heaven.”²⁹

The Scriptures taken from the prophets in the section above clearly indicated that they testified to the people to follow the law of Moses for the intent in which it was given. “Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long suffering, the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to *look forward unto the Messiah*, and believe in him to come, as though he already was.”³⁰ We also read from Jacob, chapter five, “Behold, I say unto you, that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.”³¹

Although there are numerous instances during Jesus’s ministry where we read of the words of the prophets being fulfilled, we know that He did not fulfill every prophecy as many have yet to come to pass, such as those concerning the establishment of Zion and the second coming of the Son of God. Jesus told the disciples concerning the latter days, “Verily I say unto you, this generation, in which these things shall be shown forth, shall not pass away until all I have told you shall be fulfilled.”³² Thus we see that the law and the prophets are separate for while Jesus did not fulfill all of the prophets as yet, He did fulfill all of the law. Jesus told the Pharisees, “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail. And why teach ye the law, and deny that which is written; and condemn him whom the Father hath sent to *fulfill the law*, that ye might all be redeemed?”³³ Please read the words of the Master concerning both the law and the prophets from 3 Nephi 7:3-10:

7:3 And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words, he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the Law of Moses; for they understood not the saying, that old things had passed away, and that **all things had become new**. **7:4** And he said unto them, Marvel not that I said unto you, that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. **7:5** Behold, I say unto you, that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. **7:6** Behold, **I am he that gave the law**, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfill the law; therefore, it hath an end.

7:7 Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily, I say unto you, **shall all be fulfilled**. **7:8** And because I said unto you, that old things hath passed

²⁹ Matthew 5:19-21

³⁰ Jarom 1:24-25

³¹ Jacob 5:19

³² Matthew 24:35

³³ Luke 16:19-20

away, **I do not destroy** that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. **7:9** For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people, ***is not all fulfilled***; but the law which was given unto Moses, ***hath an end in me***. **7:10** Behold, I am the law, and the light; look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live, for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.

It is crucial to understand that the law of Moses was ended and finished in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as well as in His resurrection [read Alma 16:207-217]. Therefore, there is no reason for mankind to follow the law any further. Paul wrote in the eight chapter of Hebrews, “Therefore while he [Jesus] was on the earth, he offered for a sacrifice his own life for the sins of the people. Now every priest under the law [of Moses], must needs offer gifts, or sacrifices, according to the law. Who serve unto the example and *shadow of heavenly things*, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more *excellent ministry*, by how much also he is the mediator of a *better covenant*, which was established upon *better promises*.³⁴” There should be no doubt that while the law has been finished, many of the prophecies from the Scriptures have yet to be fulfilled.

The Purpose of the Law of Moses

In Galatians, chapter three, Paul wrote that the law of Moses was added because of the transgressions of the people, and that the law would remain until the mediator of the first covenant, which is Jesus Christ, came to fulfill the law, saying, “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster until Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.³⁵”

However, just as God does not give a commandment without preparing a way for it, God does not give a commandment without a purpose. Though we have already discussed that the law was given in order to lead people to Christ, we would like to present the following Scriptures to the reader from the Book of Mormon which further testify of the purpose of the law and also clearly give evidence that our salvation does not come through the law of Moses but through the atoning blood of Jesus. Please read the following from 2 Nephi 11:42-51, Jacob 3:3-6, Mosiah 1:110-113, Mosiah 8:3-13, Alma 14:74-77, Alma 16:207-217: [Scriptures have been presented in chronological order. Additionally, it is important to remember that in all these Scriptures the people were under the law]

11:43 For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, ***to believe in Christ***, and to be reconciled to God; **11:44** For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

³⁴ Hebrews 8:4-6

³⁵ Galatians 3:23-26

11:45 And notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled; for, **for this end was the law given**; **11:46** Wherefore, the law hath become **dead unto us**, and we are made alive in Christ, because of our faith; **11:47** Yet we keep the law because of the commandments; **11:48** And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophecy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.

11:49 Wherefore, we speak concerning the law, that our children may know the **deadness of the law**; **11:50** And they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. **11:51** And after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they need not harden their hearts against him, when the law ought to be done away.

3:3 Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren, and our children, will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them, that they may learn with joy, and not with sorrow, neither with contempt concerning their first parents: **3:4** For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory, many hundred years before his coming, and not only we, ourselves, had a hope of his glory, but also **all the holy prophets** which were before us.

3:5 Behold, they believed in Christ, and worshipped the Father in his name; and also, we worship the Father in his name. **3:6** And for this intent, we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for their cause, it is sanctified unto us, for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness, to be obedient unto the commands of God, in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his only begotten Son.

1:110 Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a stiffnecked people, and he **appointed unto them a law**, even the law of Moses. **1:111** And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows shewed he unto them, concerning his coming: **1:112** And also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; **1:113** And yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses **availeth nothing, except** it were through the atonement of his blood;

8:3 And now ye have said that salvation cometh by the Law of Moses. **8:4** I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the Law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the Law of Moses. **8:5** And moreover, I say unto you, that salvation doth not come by the law alone; and were it not for the atonement which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, that they must unavoidably perish, notwithstanding the law of Moses.

8:6 And now I say unto you, that it was expedient that there should be a law given to the children of Israel, yea, **even a very strict law**: for they were a stiff-necked people: quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God; **8:7** Therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to **observe strictly**, from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God, and their duty towards him. **8:8** But behold, I say unto you, that all these things were types of things to come.

8:9 And now, did they understand the law? **8:10** I say unto you, Nay, they did not all understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts: for they understood not that there could not any man be saved, **except it were through the redemption of God**. **8:11** For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people, yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began? **8:12** Have they not spoken more or less concerning these things? **8:13** Have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth?

14:74...and they did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe to keep his commandments, and his statutes, yea, and they did keep the Law of Moses; for it was **expedient** that they should keep the Law of Moses as yet, for it was not all fulfilled. **14:75** But notwithstanding the Law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, concerning that **the Law of Moses was a type of his coming**, and believing that they must keep those outward performances, until the time that he should be revealed unto them. **14:76** Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the Law of Moses; but the Law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; **14:77** And thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the spirit of prophecy, which spake of those things to come.

16:207 Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall **atone for the sins of the world**; for the Lord God has spoken it; **16:208** For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the eternal God, there must be an atonement made, or else all **mankind must unavoidably perish**; **16:209** Yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen, and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made; **16:210** For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice: but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice.

16:211 Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood, which will atone for the sins of another. **16:212** Now if a man murdereth, behold, will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay. **16:213** But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore there can be nothing, which is short of an **infinite atonement**, which will suffice for the sins of the world; therefore it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; **16:214** And then shall there be, or it is expedient there should be, a stop to the

shedding of blood; then shall the Law of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall all be fulfilled; every jot and tittle, and none shall have passed away.

16:215 And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law; every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice **will be the Son of God**; yea, infinite and eternal; and thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; **16:216** This being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. **16:217** And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance, is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore, only unto him that has faith unto repentance, is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

Conclusion

The law of Moses is perhaps one of the most misunderstood subjects in all of Scripture, and it presents many natural questions, such as “If God does not change then why did He give a different commandment to Israel,” and “If God does not give carnal commandments, then why was the law of Moses given with carnal ordinances.” We hope that this chapter has answered both answered these questions and others that the reader might have. It is absolutely imperative to understand that God does not change, for if He changed, how could we believe in Him or trust in Him? Thus, the Lord has given us four foundational principles, which are that He does not change, that His word cannot return unto Him void, that His word is eternal, and that His truth has been established from the foundation of the world. If any of these four principles were to be violated, then God would cease to be God. However, through the many witnesses and testimonies that we have experienced we know that He ceases not to be God.

Therefore, we have learned through this study that God Himself gave the children of Israel the law of Moses because they desired a carnal commandment rather than a heavenly. Additionally, we have learned that the law itself was not carnal, for it was given by God, but instead it was in the imitation of a carnal commandment which would lead the people to Jesus Christ if they followed the law for the intent in which it was given. Finally, the reader found that because of our agency we can choose if we so desire to add to or change the commandments of God. Nonetheless, by doing so we will become blinded as Israel was blinded by their various burnt offerings, sacrifices, and incense. Wherefore, it is important that we hearken to the commandments of God which have been given from the very beginning to love God and to love one another, as well as to be spiritually born into the Kingdom of God by the water, the Spirit, and the blood.