**The New Stone Tablets**

The chapter begins with God telling Moses to chisel out 2 stones like the first ones and He would write on them the words that were on the ones that Moses had broken. God may have provided the original stones which Matthew Henry speculates were actually thinner slate rather than thicker stones. He did not rebuke Moses for breaking the first ones as Moses had done so in righteous anger. God called Moses once again up to the top of the mountain instructing him not to allow anyone to come near the mountain.

When Moses reached the mountaintop, God descended in a cloud and passed before Moses as he had requested in the previous chapter. God pronounced His presence declaring the following characteristics: compassionate (merciful, KJV) and gracious, slow to anger (long suffering, KJV), abounding in love and faithfulness (goodness and truth, KJV), maintaining love (keeping mercy, KJV) to thousands, forgiving wickedness rebellion and sin (iniquity, transgression and sin, KJV). Matthew Henry noted: *“The first trait is His mercy which is the first wheel in God’s god will toward fallen man. God’s long suffering is something sinners take advantage of since God delays the execution of His judgement. His abundance speaks of plentiful goodness, streams of mercy enough for all and enough forever. He extends his mercy to thousands, it is never exhausted.”* To complete these graces, He is a forgiving God. He also states that He is a just God who does not let the guilty go unpunished. His proclamation of visiting the iniquity to of fathers on the 3rd and 4th generation seems to some unfair. John Piper noted that this applies to those who hate God (see Ex. 20:5 and Lev. 26:39).

Moses again asked God to forgive the sin of the Israelites and go with them to Canaan, acknowledging that they were a stiff-necked people. In response God pronounced His covenant with the Israelites which could be viewed as a new covenant, symbolized by the new tablets. The broken tablets symbolized that the Israelites had broken the first covenant. God repeats numerous requirements from the original covenant: Do not make treaties with the Canaanites, worship no other god and do not cast idols. He also reaffirmed that the Israelites were to celebrate the three feasts He had ordained: The Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks and Feast of Ingathering. In verse 27 Gods says that He has made a covenant with **Moses** and Israel. This confirms the special relationship Moses enjoyed with God and that the people benefited not because of their standing with God but Moses’ standing with God.

Moses was on the mountaintop for another 40 days, this time with no food or water. He was sustained by the power of God which was evident by his radiant face reflecting the glow of being in God’s presence. This is another example of a similarity with Jesus who was also without food and water for 40 days (see Matt. 4:2). I believe his face was different the second time because God allowed him a glimpse of His presence. Another notable difference between the first and second times he came down the mountain was the condition of the camp which had not devolved into debauchery. The radiance of Moses’ face can be viewed as symbolic of the transfiguration of Jesus as described in Matthew 17:1-9. Paul wrote that the radiance of Moses’ faced faded over time and likened it to the Old Covenant as compared to the New Covenant. “*Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”* (2nd Cor. 37-11).Bob Deffinbaugh wrote*: “The old covenant, Paul tells us, was one that was written in stone; the new is written on men’s hearts.  The old covenant produced condemnation and death; the new produces righteousness and life. The old covenant had a fading glory, the new an eternal glory.”*