

Deuteronomy 9:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

Analysis

And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes. Moses' dramatic shattering of the stone tablets provides prophetic symbolism - Israel has broken the covenant in reality, and Moses demonstrates this physically through breaking the covenant document.

The act was not emotional rage but prophetic demonstration. The tablets represented the covenant relationship between God and Israel; Israel's idolatry had already shattered that covenant spiritually. Moses' physical breaking of the tablets declared publicly what had happened spiritually.

That Moses did this before your eyes emphasizes the public, witnessed nature of covenant violation. Sin is not private matter between individual and God alone when it involves the covenant community. Israel's corporate rebellion required public confrontation and declaration of broken covenant status.

Reformed theology sees this as illustrating the principle that the law brings death to covenant-breakers. The stone tablets, which should have been Israel's charter of blessing, became testimony against them. Only God's gracious renewal of the covenant (providing new tablets) would restore the relationship.

Historical Context

Moses' breaking of the tablets finds parallel in ancient Near Eastern treaty practices, where covenant documents were broken or torn to signify treaty violation. This symbolic act would have communicated clearly to Israel that the covenant relationship stood in jeopardy.

God later commanded Moses to cut new tablets and rewrote the Ten Commandments, demonstrating covenantal grace that restores despite human failure.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why was it important for Moses to break the tablets publicly rather than simply report Israel's sin?
2. How does the broken covenant tablets picture the spiritual reality of covenant violation?
3. In what sense does the law bring death to those who violate it?
4. How does God's provision of new tablets demonstrate His covenant faithfulness despite human unfaithfulness?
5. What does this teach us about the seriousness of sin within the covenant community?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶתְפַּשֵּׂת
And I took my two tables and cast them out of my two hands
H8610 H8147 H3871 H7993 H5921 H8147 H3027

לְעֵינֵיכֶם: וְאֶשְׁבֶּר מִ
and brake them before your eyes
H7665 H5869

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