

Week 8: “The Decalogue”

1. READ

Pastor Watley’s Scripture: Exodus 19 : 16 – 22 New King James Version (NKJV)

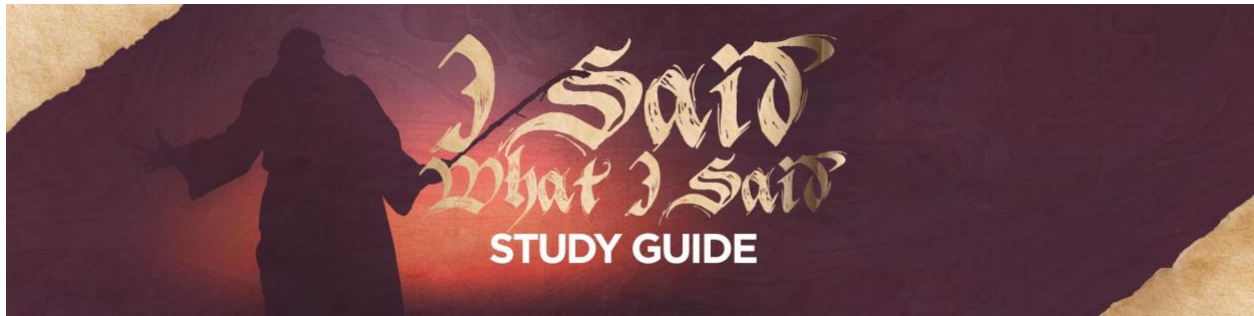
¹⁶ Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. ¹⁹ And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. ²⁰ Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. ²² Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.”

Further Reading: Acts 2 : 1 – 13 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The Crowd’s Response

⁵ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷ Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? ⁸ And how *is it* that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” ¹² So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?” ¹³ Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”



Suggested Chapters to Study This Week: Exodus 19 and Exodus 20

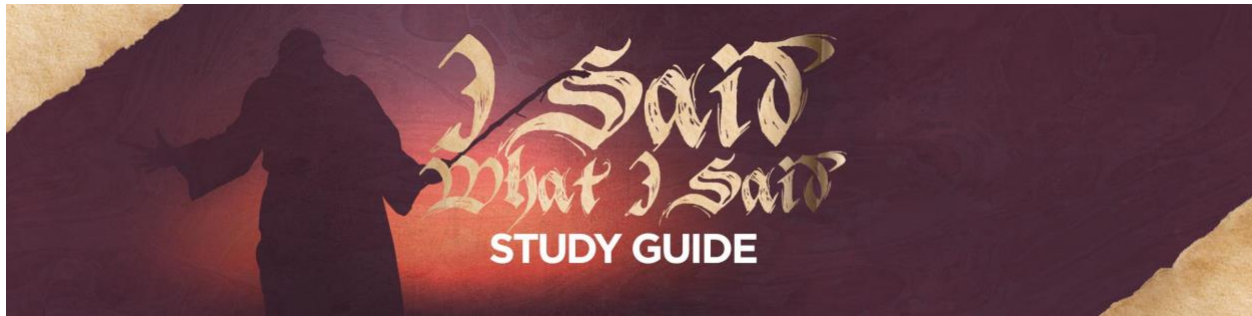
2. REFLECT

[Make sure to review this week's sermon!]



As we continue on our journey through Pastor Watley's sermon series entitled "I What I Said," we've explored the life, legacy, mission, and ministry of Moses. Each week we have studied some of the moments that were central to his growth, development, and maturity as a person of faith. However in addition to his triumphs, we have also been able to learn vital lessons from his failures. Using these biblical examples, we've witnessed that fact that God will move in miraculous ways to ensure our deliverance – even in spite of our shortcomings!

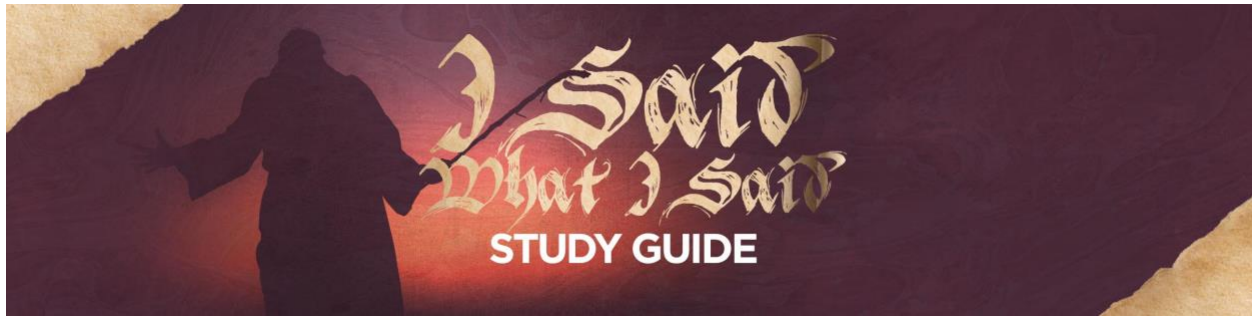
In our lesson for week eight entitled "The Decalogue," Pastor Watley urges us to understand the significance of the miracles, signs, and wonders that we experience in our own lives. In fact, God often utilizes these methods of communication as symbols to convey something deeper. As Pastor Watley mentions, it is our responsibility to identify the symbols in our situation and then ask ourselves: *"What is God really trying to say in the midst of all of this?"*



In addition, we are reminded that scripture itself is a “symbol system.” Similar to the way we learn and can easily recognize the symbols in the world around us, we must train ourselves to recognize the intricate system of symbols in the Word of God. By reading closely and carefully, we can be more intentional about noticing the significance of God’s actions and patterns. We see this principle at work in our scripture for this week (Exodus 19:16-22). In this text, Moses makes several trips to meet God on behalf of the people. However, before we even get to the significance of the communication, we must immediately recognize the significance of the location. Verse 18 tells us that Moses and the children of Israel were camped around **Mount Sinai**. This was in fact the same mountain referred to as **Mount Horeb** in other passages of scripture, which is considered to be the “Mountain of God.” It is no coincidence that the children of Israel are taken to this mountain and it later becomes the location where God consistently arrives to provide instruction.

In chapter 19 alone, Moses travels up the mountain three times to hear from God. As Moses seeks God he learns: that their obedience will ensure their survival (verses 1-9), that they must consecrate themselves for three days (verses 10-15), and that there will be signs and symbols to reveal God’s presence (verses 16-25). This is important because as Pastor Watley notes, “God is still in the sign-performing business!” Our scripture for this week clearly illustrates the various signs that symbolized the intensity of God’s presence. Verse 16 says there were “thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled.” These signs served as unmistakable, undeniable proof that God was speaking. However, in addition to providing signs, God also enforced a level of separation. God’s people are instructed to practice discipline and live within certain boundaries by consecrating themselves for three days. These boundaries allowed them to be set apart and solely focused on their relationship with God.

And yet, those boundaries were reinforced by the shroud that secured and concealed the presence of God. Verse 18 says “Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace...” This shroud, or covering of smoke, was the protection mechanism that guarded the holiness of God while allowing God to selectively disclose elements of Himself to His people. Although they were unable to experience the fullness of God’s presence, God disclosed more to them as they sought Him. Not to mention, earlier in chapter 19, verse 3 says “And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain...” That indicates to us that when Moses took the initiative to approach God first and get closer in proximity to Him, he heard the Lord call. This is important for us because how many times do we wait to hear from God, without taking any steps towards Him? Perhaps we can’t hear because we are too far away! However, we can take comfort in knowing that our God is also systematic, so once we get in alignment with His system, we can get close enough to hear His instruction. For the Israelites, once they got in alignment, they were able to receive the most important instruction they would receive – The decalogue also known as the 10 Commandments!



3. RESPOND

Introspective Questions

- What is this passage of scripture saying to you? What is God really trying to say?
- How has God been trying to get your attention in this season?

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Moses needed to go up to the mountain three times to speak with God?
- How would you have reacted if you experienced the “thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain”? Would you have been afraid, or excited that God was near?