

Here am I, send me?

By Bob Young

Countless mission sermons have been preached from Isaiah 6. To respond to God's voice, to think that God is sending me is encouraging, exciting. Have we misunderstood? Have we failed to honor context? Isaiah 6 deserves closer study. What can we learn from Isaiah's unique commission?

First, Isaiah had a "close encounter" with God. Isaiah 6 follows Isaiah 1-5. Isaiah has heard the Lord, is speaking for the Lord—you rebellious people, recognize God's new work, humble yourselves before God's judgment. When Isaiah volunteers to go, he is already speaking for God! Isaiah describes a personal encounter with God. Isaiah knew God, had seen God, recognized God. Isaiah knew well the holiness, power, strength, wisdom, and glory of God. Isaiah had seen the glory of the Lord filling the whole earth. Isaiah was humbled, a changed man, after encountering God!

Second, Isaiah saw himself – his littleness, his life, his self. Isaiah saw the unholiness of the people around him. Isaiah's heart was touched, he saw the lostness of the people, he saw their need.

Third, Isaiah had a clear experience of being redeemed, declared guiltless, sin atoned for. Isaiah responded out of gratitude. When he heard the Lord asking who would go, he responded, "Here am I, send me." Do not stop reading. Be cautious about applying Isaiah's response. Does this verse say all should go?

Fourth, God sent Isaiah to his own people. God did not send him far away as with Jonah or to a neighboring people like Amos. God sent him next door. God sent him with a message: "Even though you claim to listen you do not understand, even though you claim to see you cannot perceive." God sent him with a message that would be rejected. The hearts of the people would become dull, heavy ears, blind eyes. Isaiah, your job is to share the message until the people are sick of it. God sent Isaiah to his neighbors with the promise that they would not respond.

Fifth, Isaiah got tired of "going." He was sent next door, but he got tired of going next door, speaking to those who would not listen. How long do I have to keep this up? God's response? "My word is certain, go and do not stop going until the land is a desolate waste" (a prophecy of captivity). You go and keep speaking so that the Lord can do his work.

Study Isaiah 6 in context. Do not stop reading halfway through the passage. How do you know God is sending you? How do you know God wants you to go? What are your expectations, reasons, for going?

Is God still sending people today? YES! (1) God sends people who have encountered God. (2) God sends people acutely aware of how much people need the Lord. (3) God sends people grateful for forgiveness. (4) God send people next door. If a person is not answering God's call to go next door, why send that person halfway around the world? (5) God sends people with a message. If you do not know the message, understand the message, communicate the message, share the message – if you are not ready to go with a message, perhaps God is not sending you. (6) God sends people who will be rejected. (7) God sends people who are tired of going, would rather not go. "Woe is me" if I do not share the gospel.