

HERE AM I, SEND ME

Isaiah 6:1-8

God has filled His Bible with numerous stories that all revolve around a limited set of messages. The diversity of those stories offers readers a variety of ways to engage God's will and its place in their lives. Consequently, some stories will impact us more than others. The account of Isaiah receiving a prophetic commission from God in Isaiah chapter six particularly resonates with me. So, we will consider Isaiah six and think about what insights Isaiah's commission offers us into the evangelistic commission God gives to all of us.

Isaiah's vision

God called Isaiah to be His prophet during a time of peace and prosperity in Judah (*Isaiah 6:1; 2 Chronicles 26*). Rather than cultivating a thankfulness that drew them into a deeper relationship with God, the nation responded to its blessings by becoming "proud" and "lofty" (*2 Chronicles 26:16; Isaiah 2:5-22; Jeremiah 7:1-15*). Judah's self-absorbed pride nurtured a greediness that led to the abuses of both people and justice (*Isaiah 2:5-22; 3:13-26; 5:8-23*) and the rejection of God's will even while the people maintained their worship of God (*Isaiah 1:2-15; 5:11-12, 24*). And so, God commissioned Isaiah to deliver a message of coming judgment to people living in peace and prosperity.

God's holy presence revealed Isaiah's guilt (Isaiah 6:1-5)

- Isaiah found himself suddenly transported into God's temple, into the holy of holies, where he saw God on His throne (*Isaiah 6:1*).
 - The holy of holies, the innermost chamber in the temple, housed God's throne and was a carefully guarded location. Only select Levites were permitted in and only after strict purification rituals; all outsiders who approached it were killed (*cf. Exodus 19:21; Number 1:51*).
 - Isaiah, who was not a Levite and who had not purified himself, found himself suddenly transported into God's throne room where he saw a terrifying scene – He saw "seraphim,"¹ divine serpent-like beings ("seraphim" is the plural form of the Hebrew word for serpent, *cf. Numbers 21:6*), each with six wings flying around God praising Him with voices so loud they shook the temple's foundations (*cf. Exodus 19:16, 19*).
- Isaiah's vision of God's holiness made him painfully aware of his guilt and unworthiness to be in God's presence (*Isaiah 6:5*).

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



Isaiah's guilt made God's presence a dangerous place but also the place where he encountered God's mercy (Isaiah 6:6-7).

- Overcome by what he saw, Isaiah believed he would be killed (*Isaiah 6:5; cf. Exodus 33:20*).
- One of the seraphim grabbed a hot coal from the temple's incense altar, rushed at Isaiah, and put the coal to his mouth (*Isaiah 6:6-7*). Rather than being killed, Isaiah was instead purified and permitted to be in God's presence.
- Isaiah's cleansing illustrates an important truth – even though peoples' sins could defile the temple (*cf. Leviticus 16:16*), God's righteousness proved more contagious than Isaiah's impurity.

Isaiah's encounter with God's mercy indebted Him to God (Isaiah 6:8-13)

- Feeling gratitude for the mercy extended to him, Isaiah volunteered for a mission he overheard God discussing, a job whose details he did not know.
- God gave Isaiah the challenging task of delivering a message of judgment and redemption to people He knew would reject what He had to say.
- Even though God gave him a difficult mission, Isaiah accepted it, and the remainder of the book recounts his long and challenging ministry.

What can we learn from Isaiah's vision?

- God chooses to work through us despite our imperfections.
- Even though an act of mercy and grace, God's choice to work through us requires us to work.
- Because God is holy and we are not, working with God requires our transformation.
- God entrusts us with a difficult mission; like Isaiah, He commissions us to be His spokespeople in the world.
- Also, like Isaiah, we need a vision of God's overwhelming worthiness to motivate us.

May God help us humbly and faithfully fulfill the mission to represent Him in the world through our words and our actions.

