

## Responding to God's Call

6 December, 2009

By Rev. Lonny R. Bower

Scripture Reference – Isaiah 6:1-13

**Unit Theme:** Major Prophets

**Central Truth:** The call of God for service comes to those who submit to Him.

**Focus:** Study Isaiah's response to God's call and surrender our will to Him.

**Key Verse:** Isaiah 6:8

**Introduction:**

*<sup>1</sup>The name "Isaiah" means "Yahweh is salvation." The year of Isaiah's death is unknown but it was probably after Hezekiah's death in 686 B.C. (and therefore probably in Manasseh's sole reign, 686-642) because Isaiah wrote a biography of King Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:32). Isaiah's death would have occurred after Sennacherib's death (Isa. 37:38), which was in 681 B.C. Since the prophet's ministry began sometime in Uzziah's reign (790-739 B.C.) Isaiah ministered for at least 58 years (from at least 739, when Uzziah died [6:1], to 681, when Sennacherib died). According to tradition dating from the second century A.D., Isaiah was martyred by King Manasseh. Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 100-165) wrote that Isaiah was sawed asunder with a saw (cf. Heb. 11:37). Eternity will only tell the rest of the story and answer the rest of our questions, but until then, we have everything God wants us to have in the book of Isaiah. The book is comprised of 66 chapters in all, the first 39 deal largely with God's judgment against sin, the last 27 chapters deal with God's redemption, restoration and a glorious future. In this manner, Isaiah is like a Bible in the Bible as the Bible is divided into 39 and 27 books and also deals with God's judgment against sin, redemption, and restoration respectively. Of all the prophets, Isaiah gives us the best picture of the Messiah, He literally takes us past the outer court and into the Holy of holies where we can see and hear (as he did) the Lord. Once there, our response should be the same as Isaiah's whose words will forever ring throughout eternity – "here I am Lord, send me."*

### **I. Awed by God's Majesty – Isaiah 6:1-4**

For one to see the Lord in the midst of a perverse and backslidden generation, says something about the Lord – That He indeed is not willing that any perish (**2 Peter 3:9**). The moral decay in Isaiah's time had reached a climax; his generation was falling away from God, and as a result were facing His judgment. For Isaiah, we can say it was the best of times and the worst of times. He saw the Lord and the glory of the Lord, it certainly doesn't get any better than this! It's important to note that Isaiah did not see the fullness of the Lord or His glory, but a glimpse. No man can see the Lord and live (**Exodus 33:18; John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12**). It is very likely that Isaiah saw Jesus and His glory, probably similar to what Peter James and John had seen on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured (**Mark 9**). This would make the most

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sense, since Isaiah would go on to describe Jesus like no other prophet had or would. God does not reveal himself just because, it's not to simply fulfill our emotional needs, but for a much greater purpose. He reveals himself to bring a revelation of our unrighteousness, so that we will see our dire need for change and turn to Him for righteousness. A man or nation for that matter cannot see God and remain unchanged. Isaiah's encounter with the Lord changed him for life! We must follow in his footsteps, to do so however, requires that we come into the presence of the Lord – often. John, just prior to seeing the Lord himself, was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (**Revelation 1:10**).

➤ **Think about it:**

Do you regularly make yourself available to the Lord, why or why not?


*"In the context of worship today, many times it is not God seated on His throne that people see. Instead, they see an exhibition of human ability. They hear music, but do they hear God? They hear preaching, but do they meet God?"*

– Ron Owens

### II. Cleansed for Service – Isaiah 6:5-7

One cannot enter the presence of the Lord and not feel overwhelmed by His majesty, glory and righteousness. In God's presence we are simply underdressed and incapable of finding any covering that is suitable for the engagement. Adam and Eve demonstrated this by trying to cover their shame with leaves; the Lord provided a suitable covering for them and so He will for us too. Isaiah thought that His life was over, for he immediately recognized that he was not worthy to stand in the presence of the King. Though he had been ministering and speaking God's word to the people of Israel, warning them to repent or face His judgment, he quickly found that in God's presence, he was no better than the people he warned. How the preachers of today need to understand the importance of their own need for the Lord. Only then will God cleanse, empower and send forth with a message that burns as it goes forth. The Seraphim mentioned here is the only place we see them in the scriptures. The Hebrew word שָׂרָפִים *śârâph* (*saw-rawf'*) means burning. How we need a like encounter to burn up the chaff in our own lives so that we can effectively introduce the world to Jesus. God's word, like the Seraphim burns as it goes forth and it is only by His word that we will stand and effectively carry out His commission. We cannot do it alone, or in our own strength, but must go forth in His word. His word is what cleanses us for service (**Ephesians 5:26**). Isaiah could not take up the charge of the Lord if he was not cleansed

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for service. One of the sad commentaries in the kingdom today is that there are many who are attempting to serve without ever experiencing the presence and power of God. As a result they are unaware of their own unrighteousness and are simply going through the motions where there remains a form of godliness, but absolutely no evidence of His power. The world needs more than ever for us to demonstrate God's power to them – it must affect us before it will affect them. Isaiah was ready now to answer the Lord's call to service.

➤ **Think about it:**

Describe your encounter with the presence of the Lord.


*"Men are never duly touched and impressed with conviction of their own insignificance until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God." – John Calvin*

### III. Commissioned to Serve – Isaiah 6:8-13

Not only did Isaiah see the King and His glory as it filled the temple, he also heard the Lord speak. One cannot enter into the presence of the Lord without hearing Him speak. God is not a man that is often speechless with nothing to say. On the contrary, He has a message for His people and it is His desire that His own chosen servants carry His message to the masses. In all His majesty and glory He desires to convict, restore and equip you and I to carry His word to the world. This is the greatest privilege humanity will ever have – to share the word of God so that others too can enter the presence and experience the glory, majesty and power of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Notice the likeness of the Lord's words here "Go and tell" to the words He spoke to His Disciples in Matthew 28:19 – "Go and preach". Though we can take comfort in knowing that we have the power and authority of God behind us, we must not mistake this with the assumption that people will hear. In Isaiah's case the people had already made up their minds that they were not going to serve God, they would not repent. However, God always makes sure that all men are without excuse, they will not stand before Him on judgment day and say, "I never knew, I did not hear your warnings". Instead they'll know that they had opportunity, but refused it. The Lord revealed to Isaiah that his would not be an easy task, but yet it must be carried out – in this way, the Lord has many that are called but few that are chosen (**Matthew 22:14**). However, out of the judgment of God, there remains a remnant of faithful servants who

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stand and cling to the hope of the new dawn that God will soon bring. This is Isaiah's overall message, judgment is certain, but so is restoration and hope. The Lord will provide a deliverer.

➤ **Think about it:**

How would you react to God's call if He told you the difficulties and rejection you would face?


*"It is in the sermon delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit that God deals with man on the basis of His infinite wisdom and grace." – Robert Rayburn*

### **Conclusion:**

God has not changed, He is still clothed in majesty and glory and He is still seeking those who would answer His call to service. It is simply His desire to use us to carry His word to the world. We do not choose who will receive or reject His message, but must be faithful to speak it nonetheless. However, the authenticity of the message we preach stems from the encounter we had with the Lord. The question that we must ask ourselves is, when was the last time I experienced the presence of the Lord? Perhaps this is what the world needs most – for us (God's chosen servants) to have a new encounter with His presence. Doing so will enable us to see ourselves as we really are and will ultimately result in our cleansing and equipping for service. Finally, like Isaiah, perhaps an encounter with God will bring about a confirmation of a present ministry and or a new ministry God has ordained for our lives. He may simply be waiting for us to enter into the Holy of holies. The eternity of countless souls lie in the balance – will we acknowledge the need for workers (**Matthew 9:37, 38**) and answer the call to service by saying here am I Lord, send me?

<sup>1</sup>*The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* © 1985, SP Publications, Inc.

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*Except where I have paraphrased all scripture is taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.*

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### **Next Week's Lesson – The Glory of Christ's Kingdom**

- I. Nature of the King – Isaiah 11:1-5**
- II. Nature of the Kingdom – Isaiah 11:6-10**
- III. Joy of the Kingdom – Isaiah 35:3-10**