

When Isaiah Says “Here I Am Lord, Send Me,” Where Is He Going?

[Bethany Verrett](#)

2021 3 Sep



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Navigating the meaning of statements from the Old Testament prophets can be difficult. Some sayings are obscure and vague, making them hard to understand. Others have such specific meanings to their time, it can be difficult to imagine how they could be relevant to believers today. Some verses are so famous they are ubiquitous. They have become part of common language, and their meaning is changed by out-of-context usage or misuse by non-believers.

Centuries ago, the prophet Isaiah cried out, “Here I am! Send me” ([Isaiah 6:8b](#)). This famous response to the call of God has been worked into books, songs, and speeches ever since. Here, Isaiah modelled the response of a believer to the invitation of God to join Him in His work in the world, to spread the news of His love, justice, and coming kingdom; Isaiah in his day obeyed the call to be a prophet to the nation of Israel, and today those who have a relationship with the Lord are called to obey and follow the Great Commission, to tell the world about Jesus Christ.

What Is the Context for [Isaiah 6](#)?

Chapter 6 in the book of Isaiah is rich with historical information, theological insight, and awe-inspiring glimpses into what it looks like at the throne of God. It begins by sharing that the visions recorded were given the year King Uzziah died. His reign was somewhere around 783-742 BC, and he suffered from leprosy because of his disobedience of God’s law. Though he started out being a good king, he fell into sin and ruined his legacy. His sons ran the government because of his sickness.

Theologians look back at Uzziah as a king who had great promise, but ultimately let his pride get the better of him, and he was not all he could have been, had he been more faithful to the Lord. The visions God sent to Isaiah at that time, and the call He was going to put out came on the heels of another disappointing ruler, though perhaps not its wickedest.

The next section of the chapter details the visions God sent Isaiah at the beginning of his call to be God's prophet. He showed Isaiah the great throne of the Lord, with the angels singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ([Isaiah 6:3b](#)). As a result of seeing God enthroned in all His glory, Isaiah cried out for forgiveness of His sins, overwhelmed by the might and holiness of God and crushed beneath the weight of his own sin. God forgave Isaiah, and purged his lips with hot coals. This moment in the Old Testament is one where Isaiah was deemed cleansed – not because of his own merit or sacrifice, but God's mercy, foreshadowing the coming grace for all people through Jesus Christ.

Isaiah Was Willing to Go, Wherever God Sent Him

It is at this point in the passage that the lines are recorded, "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.'" The Lord wanted to use someone to warn the people, to call them to repentance, and Isaiah volunteered to go be that person. It should be noted God could only use Isaiah after his sins were cleansed.

The message God initially charged Isaiah with was, "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed" ([Isaiah 6:9b-10](#)). The people of Israel and Judah were often in conflict with the Lord, rebelling against His laws and rejecting His love, so God sent Isaiah to declare their sins back to them, as well as the consequences.

God told Isaiah to preach to the people, but knew they would not hear the truth. They would ignore him. In the second half of the prophecy, covered in [verses 11-13](#), the Lord paints a bleak picture for Isaiah. It would take a long time, a lot of hardship and pain before the people of Israel would hear and repent. Isaiah was still willing to go share the word of God, knowing it would not be discerned in his lifetime. Despite the sad implications, God ends His message to the people with some hope; "'And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.' The holy seed is its stump" ([Isaiah 6:13](#)). That holy seed is a reference to the coming Savior, Jesus Christ, who would also be called the Shoot of Jesse later in Isaiah's prophecies. No matter how small Israel became, no matter how disobedient, in that nation lay the hope for salvation.

How Does This Statement, “Here I Am, Send Me” Apply Today?

The Lord still has plans and purposes He wants to accomplish by sending each person out with Him. It helps people grow closer to Him, be more like Him, and have experiences that will have significance into eternity. Isaiah called people into repentance, and - according to church tradition - was martyred for following the Lord.

When looking at how God wants to use Christians, Jesus issued a similar call as He ascended back to [Heaven](#) to be with the Father until His return; “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). Just like Isaiah had to be cleansed of his sins before He could say, “Here I am Lord, send me,” a person must repent of their sins, and be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. To be useful to the Lord, there must be a relationship.

Isaiah’s willingness to go and be obedient to whatever God asked him is an example for today’s believers to follow. Isaiah agreed to go for the Lord before he knew what God was going to ask him to say. Likewise, Christians should be willing to obey the Great Commission, however God leads them to fulfill it, even if they are not sure what their specific assignment may be. Some people will be called to go to the ends of the earth to give the Gospel to unreached people groups. Others will be in the secular workplace, reaching their neighborhoods for Christ. Regardless of what assignment God wants to give His children, it is important, and the believer should embrace it, obey, and do it with love.

Isaiah saw the many sins of Israel, but was called to preach God’s truth. Ultimately, he knew going into his assignment that he was not called to fix Israel’s problems, but point them to the mercy of the Lord and the hope of a coming Messiah. Today, Christians cannot fix every problem in their respective cultures and societies, as man’s heart is desperately wicked. They can and should go out and share the good news that Jesus Christ came as the Messiah, died for everyone’s sins, rose from the grave, and now offers forgiveness and eternity in Heaven with him. Just like Isaiah responded with passion and obedience to God’s assignment for Him, Christians should answer to the Great Commission with the same fervent answer, “Here I Am! Send me.”

Sources

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