

# “Here Am I! Send Me”: The Prophet Isaiah



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Lev. 16:30, 17:11, Isa. 6: 1–10, 49:6, Jer. 3:22, Matt. 28:18–20, Heb. 1:2.*

**Memory Text:** “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’” (*Isaiah 6:8, NKJV*).

**Key Thought:** Isaiah was a powerful eighth-century prophet who spoke out against sin and corruption, championed justice and righteousness, and prophesied the coming of the Messiah. What parallels can we find for ourselves today?

A central part of Isaiah’s mission was to reform the southern kingdom of Judah. He spoke out against sin and corruption and the nation’s rebellion against God.

But Isaiah’s mission extended further than just reform within Judah. He envisioned a day when Judah’s mission would be to represent God to the world. Judah was not to remain inward-looking; it had a mission to all other nations. Isaiah quotes God as saying, “ ‘I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.’ ” (*Isa. 42:6, NIV*).

This large vision of mission extending to the whole world was lost sight of in following years. Not until Jesus’ own ministry, and the ministry of the apostles in the book of Acts, do we see this vision of the gospel to all the world put into action, a vision that we are called to be part of in our day and age, as well.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 27.*

## Woe Is Me!

**Read** Isaiah 6:1–6. What was happening to Isaiah?

---

---

God transports Isaiah through vision into the heavenly throne room, where he sees God Himself seated on a throne, “high and lifted up” (*Isa. 6:1*).

In his vision of God’s throne room, Isaiah is treated to an amazing spectacle. He sees the train of God’s robe filling the temple and six-winged flying beings called seraphim. He hears them calling to each other in praise to God. Their voices must have been powerful, because they caused the doorposts to shake and the temple was filled with smoke.

**Compare** Isaiah’s vision with these others who had an experience of seeing God. What was the common reaction? What important lesson can we take from these reactions about ourselves and our relationship to our Creator? *Exod. 20:18, 19; Judg. 13:22; Job 42:5, 6; Rev. 1:17.*

---

---

In response to his vision of “the King, the Lord of hosts,” Isaiah cries out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (*Isa. 6:5, NIV*).

*Damah*, the Hebrew word for undone, means “cut off” or “finished.” The King James Version also translates the word as “perish” (*Ps. 49:12, 20*) and as “destroyed” (*Hos. 4:6*). This word indicates that the experience totally devastated Isaiah. The vision of God helped Isaiah understand what he, himself, was really like in contrast to his Maker.

**What was it about seeing God that caused this reaction? How does this help us understand why Jesus came in human flesh to reveal to us what God is really like?**

## Thy Sin Is Purged

Isaiah's encounter with the Divine is an extraordinary occasion. He describes it as an experience that affects all his senses: He sees the six-winged seraph and God on His throne; he hears the seraphims' thundering voices; he smells the smoke in the temple; and he feels and tastes the live coal the seraphim places on his lips (*Isa. 6:1–6*).

As we saw in yesterday's lesson, after this experience of seeing God, Isaiah is overcome by his own unworthiness.

Indeed, his utterance in Isaiah 6:5 is a confession of his sin and that of his people.

**Why** the emphasis on “unclean lips”? Was Isaiah's and his people's only sin that of what they spoke? What might that have been a symbol of? See also *Prov. 13:3, Matt. 12:37, Luke 6:45*.

As soon as Isaiah confesses, a seraphim takes a live coal from the heavenly altar, flies with it to Isaiah, and touches it to his lips.

**Read** Isaiah 6:6, 7. What happens here? What is symbolized by this act? What message can we take from this for ourselves?

---



---

In and of himself, Isaiah, a man of unclean lips, has nothing to offer God. But through the work of the Lord Himself, Isaiah's sin is purged. The Hebrew word translated purged comes from the root *qaphar*, commonly translated in the Old Testament as “atone” or “atonement” (see *Exod. 29:36, 30:10, Lev. 16:30, 17:11*). The point is that Isaiah, without divine intervention, without his sin being purged or covered (*qaphar has also been understood to mean covered; see Gen. 6:14*) would not have been able to do anything for the Lord. He had to be made right with God first; only then could the Lord use him.

**What things in your own life are standing in the way of God's being able to use you? What must you submit to in order to have your sin purged?**

## “Here Am I! Send Me”

When Isaiah hears the call from God, he immediately responds, “Here am I! Send me” (*Isa. 6:8*). Notice that Isaiah answers the call before he knows the details of the assignment (*see also Heb. 11:8*).

Isaiah does not respond because he believes he has the necessary gifts and talents or because he knows that he will do a good job. And he does not respond because it is a task that appeals to him (he does not even know what the task is). Isaiah responds because he knows that although he is unworthy, God is worthy. Although he is powerless, God is all powerful. Although it may not be a mission he would have chosen for himself, it is a mission God has chosen.

**Read** the Great Commission to go and teach all nations—perhaps the most important commission in all of Scripture (*Matt. 28:18–20*). Read carefully the first part of this commission. Why is this an important section that we must not overlook?

---



---



---



---

The “therefore” is critical. The only reason we can go and teach all nations is because we go in the power of the One who has all authority in heaven and on earth. If we had only our own strength, we could not go. If we relied on our own skills, we could not go. Our mission is fired by Jesus, who owns “all authority” (*NIV*) or “all power” (*KJV*) in the universe (*see Acts 17:28, Heb. 1:2, Col. 1:16*).

If we are willing, God gives us the power we need to accomplish the mission He gives us. He purifies Isaiah’s unclean lips (*Isa. 6:7*); He gives Mary the Holy Spirit and “the power of the Most High” (*Luke 1:35, NIV*); Jesus prays for Peter (*Luke 22:32*); He anoints Saul with the Holy Spirit (*Acts 9:17, 18*); He puts words in Jeremiah’s mouth (*Jer. 1:9*). Should we expect any less for ourselves, now at this crucial time in earth’s history?

**What, if anything, is holding you back from doing more for the Lord? What changes must you make? How can you learn to rely on God’s power and not your own gifts, whatever they are?**

## Isaiah's Call

**Read** God's commission to Isaiah (*Isa. 6:9, 10*). How are we to understand what God was telling Isaiah here?

Most translations of the Bible, including the King James Version, make these verses sound as if God is purposely aiming to dull the people's hearts and minds. Yet, if you read the texts carefully, you can see a bit of sarcasm, a bit of irony, in them. Why would God—who otherwise is constantly pleading with His people to listen to Him, to understand Him, to open their hearts to Him, to know Him, to look to Him, to return to Him, and to be healed by Him—say what He was saying unless He meant something else?

**Read** the following texts. How are we to understand them in light of the texts we have just seen?

*Deut. 30:6*

---

*Prov. 2:5*

---

*Jer. 3:22*

---

*Jer. 4:1*

---

All through the Bible, God was calling His people to listen, to obey, to return to Him, to be healed by Him. And yet, as we know, many did not listen. Thus, what seems to be happening here is that God is simply stating how the people will respond to Isaiah; He is not saying what He wants to happen or what He will cause to happen. As the people continually reject Isaiah's warnings, their hearts naturally harden. But this does not mean that Isaiah or God wanted this result. On the contrary, the whole Bible is a call of God to people to do all the things Isaiah said to do; as we know, however, many did not.

**What about us today? How different are we from the folk in Isaiah's time? And though, perhaps, there is not much we can do about others, what about ourselves, individually? How can we make sure we do not fall into the same spiritual trap as those depicted in Isaiah?**

## A Light to the Gentiles

Isaiah's mission was far larger than just reforming Judah. He also cast a vision of Jerusalem as a light on a hill, a witness to all nations about the one true God, and His commandments: "the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established . . . and all nations will stream to it" (*Isa. 2:2*).

**How** do we, as Adventists, understand our role in the outreach to the world? See *Rev. 14:6*.

**Read** Isaiah 42:6, 7. What role does God call Judah to play? How do we see ourselves in that role today?

**Read** Isaiah 49:6. What does this have to do with us, as Seventh-day Adventists?

It was not until the late 1860s that the Seventh-day Adventist Church realized it had a mission to foreign lands. Early Adventists had assumed the gospel commission extended only to the various people groups within North America. America was a multicultural society, and early Adventists thought they were reaching out to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people right there at home. Arthur Spalding suggests that it was a "comforting rationalization" for the early Adventist Church to assume that its mission was only to North America. —Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1962), vol. 2, p. 193.

But it was not long before the young church realized that its vision was too limited, and it launched out and began establishing the church in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Pacific, and all over the world, a work that we, individually, can be a part of, one way or another.

**What are ways you, or even your local church, could be more involved in outreach, in bringing "salvation unto the ends of the earth" (*Acts 13:47*)?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Call of Isaiah,” pp. 303–310, in *Prophets and Kings*.

“This assurance of the final fulfillment of God’s purpose brought courage to the heart of Isaiah. What though earthly powers array themselves against Judah? What though the Lord’s messenger meet with opposition and resistance? Isaiah had seen the King, the Lord of hosts; he had heard the song of the seraphim, ‘The whole earth is full of his glory’ (verse 3); he had the promise that the messages of Jehovah to backsliding Judah would be accompanied by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit; and the prophet was nerved for the work before him. Throughout his long and arduous mission he carried with him the memory of this vision. For sixty years or more he stood before the children of Judah as a prophet of hope, waxing bolder and still bolder in his predictions of the future triumph of the church.”—Ellen G. White, “The Call of Isaiah,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 11, 1915.

“The exhortations of the prophet to Judah to behold the living God, and to accept His gracious offers, were not in vain. There were some who gave earnest heed, and who turned from their idols to the worship of Jehovah. They learned to see in their Maker love and mercy and tender compassion. And in the dark days that were to come in the history of Judah, when only a remnant were to be left in the land, the prophet’s words were to continue bearing fruit in decided reformation. ‘At that day,’ declared Isaiah, ‘shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.’ Isaiah 17:7, 8.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 320.

## Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Why is a prophet never popular? Imagine if Isaiah came back to life and functioned as a prophet to the Adventist Church. What do you think he would have to say? Would his message have changed? What about our views toward Ellen G. White? Are many of us, perhaps, doing the same thing to her that many in Israel did to their own prophets? Discuss.
- ❷ Just what role do we have in the worldwide mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? How do we balance our own local needs, our own local outreach, with the divine call to spread this message to the world? How can we be faithful to both callings?

**Summary:** The prophet Isaiah accepted a mission from God that was unpopular and, in many ways, unrewarding. It was also a mission that ended with his being sawn in half. And yet, through his ministry, lives were changed—and the power of his words is still felt today.

## A New Direction

by JEAN GILBERT GAËTAN

I'm from southern Haiti. When I was young, my father wanted me to become a priest. Every day after school I spent time with a priest, learning the teachings of our church.

But when I started secondary school, I lived with my sister. I found other passions, karate and the cinema. I made new friends at my new school, friends of every religion. I realized that not everyone believed as I did, and I began examining the beliefs of my friends. I joined a Protestant church, but I kept my beliefs a secret from my parents, for I knew they wouldn't be happy if they found out. I read the Bible in secret and went to church services only at night, when my friends wouldn't see me and tell my sister or my parents.

Two of my friends were Adventists; they invited me to some evangelistic meetings, but I wanted to go to the movies instead. However, one night toward the end of the series, I had nothing to do and went to the evangelistic meeting. The pastor's message was so compelling that when he invited those who wanted to take a stand for God and be baptized, I stood up. Some people objected, knowing that I had not attended all the meetings. They feared that I was playing with God, but I was serious!

I told my family that I was an Adventist. Mother objected, but I was determined to stand true to my new faith. I was 18 at the time, old enough to make such a decision. But I still was under my parents' rule.

Life became difficult at home. Mother refused to cook without pork, so many days I went without food. But I felt strong. My parents refused to pay my school fees or buy me clothes, but God provided someone to pay my school fees and give me clothes.

My parents are disappointed that I didn't become a priest, and to this day I'm the only one in the family to become an Adventist. I pray that my family will embrace the truth I've found. Thank you for your mission offerings, which helped finance the evangelistic meetings that brought me to God.



JEAN GILBERT GAËTAN (left) has completed his ministerial studies and is a pastor in Haiti.



The atonement is the biblical doctrine around which all others revolve. It is centered in Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, mediation, and return. It presupposes the presence of sin, our fundamental and desperate need of salvation, and God's loving disposition to save us.

This quarter's study will explore the rich meaning of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice. The aim of the lessons is to move you toward a greater commitment to the One who suffered so much in order to reconcile us to Himself.

## Lesson 1—God's Nature: The Basis of Atonement

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Eternal God** (*Gen. 21:33, Ps. 90:2*)

MONDAY: **A Loving God** (*Ps. 118:1–4, Rom. 5:8, 8:37–39*)

TUESDAY: **God as Creator** (*Ps. 100:3, 24:1, 2*)

WEDNESDAY: **Holy God** (*Isa. 40:25, 57:15*)

THURSDAY: **Omniscient God** (*Heb. 4:13, 1 John 3:20*)

**Memory Text**— *Isaiah 46:10*

**Sabbath Gem:** God's work of salvation is a self-willed outflow of His very nature; it does not require sinners to persuade Him to love them.

## Lesson 2—Cosmic Crisis: The Disruption of God's Established Order

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Sin: Its Origin** (*Ezek. 28:14–17*)

MONDAY: **Attack on God** (*Isa. 14: 13, 14*)

TUESDAY: **Sin and the Law of God** (*Ps. 40:8*)

WEDNESDAY: **Sin as Rebellion Against God's Government**  
(*Job 1:8–11*)

THURSDAY: **War in Heaven** (*Ezek. 28:16*)

**Memory Text**—*Colossians 1:17*

**Sabbath Gem:** Christ came to bring fair and just resolution to issues that caused the cosmic crisis of the great controversy between God and Satan.

**Lessons for the Visually Impaired** The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.