

“Here I Am; Send Me”: The Prophet¹ Isaiah



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Leviticus 16:30; Leviticus 17:11; Isaiah 6:1–10; Isaiah 49:6; Jeremiah 3:22; Matthew 28:18–20; Hebrews 1:2.

MEMORY VERSE “Then I heard the voice of the Lord. He said, ‘Who will I send? Who will go for us?’ I said, ‘Here I am. Send me!’ ” (Isaiah 6:8, NlrV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: Isaiah was a powerful prophet who lived about 800 years before Jesus was born. He spoke out against sin. He championed justice and righteousness.² And he prophesied (foretold) the coming of the Messiah (Chosen One). How is the work we do for Jesus today the same as the work Isaiah did long ago?

A CENTRAL (IMPORTANT) PART OF ISAIAH’S MISSION³ was to reform (change) the southern kingdom of Judah. He spoke out against sin and the nation’s rebellion (war) against God. But Isaiah’s mission went further than just reform (change) within Judah. He looked forward to the day when Judah’s mission would be to represent God to the world. Judah was not to keep the truth about God to themselves. Instead, it had a mission to all other nations. Isaiah quotes God as saying, “I will keep you safe. You will put my covenant with the people of Israel into effect. And you will be a light for the other nations’ ” (Isaiah 42:6, NlrV).

This understanding of worldwide missions was forgotten in following years. Not until Jesus’ own ministry (work) and the ministry of the apostles⁴ in the book of Acts do we find this understanding of the gospel (the good news about Jesus) to all the world put into action. It is an understanding that we are called to be part of in our day and in our time, too.

1. prophet—a man or woman sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

2. righteousness—God’s character that is given to us by faith; holiness.

3. mission—the special duty (work) for Jesus that a church sends a person or a group out to do.

4. apostles—the disciples (followers) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus returned to heaven.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 21**WOE (TROUBLE; A CAUSE OF SORROW) IS ME! (Isaiah 6:1–6)**

God moves Isaiah through a vision⁴ into the heavenly throne room. There Isaiah sees God Himself seated on a throne, “high and lifted up” (Isaiah 6:1, KJV).

In seeing God’s throne room, Isaiah is treated to a wonderful vision. He sees the train of God’s robe filling the temple and flying beings (angels) called seraphim. Each of the seraphim have six wings. Isaiah hears them calling to one another in praise to God. Their voices must have been powerful, because they caused the doorposts to shake, and the temple was filled with smoke.



In vision, Isaiah sees angels in the temple of God.

Compare⁶ Isaiah’s vision with these others who had an experience of seeing God in Exodus 20:18, 19; Judges 13:22; Job 42:5, 6; and Revelation 1:17. **What same feeling did each of these persons experience? What important lesson do these feelings teach us about ourselves and our relationship to our Creator (Jesus)?**

Isaiah reacts to his vision of “the King, the Lord of hosts.” He writes, “How terrible it is for me! I cried out. ‘I’m [I am] about to be destroyed! My mouth speaks sinful words. And I live among people who speak sinful words’” (Isaiah 6:5, NIV).

Damah, the Hebrew word for undone, means cut off or finished. The King James Version also translates the word as “perish” [to be destroyed] (Psalm 49:12, 20) and as “destroyed” (Hosea 4:6). This word shows that the experience totally crushed Isaiah. The vision of God helped Isaiah understand what he, himself, was really like. And it helped him understand how different he was from his Maker (God).

What was it about seeing God that caused this feeling? How does this help us understand why Jesus came in human form to show to us what God is really like?

5. vision—a special message from God that is seen in the mind or in a dream or in a trance to help a person know God’s plan.

6. compare—to show how two things are the same.

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 22

**YOUR SIN IS PURGED
(CLEANSED; REMOVED)
(Isaiah 6:6, 7)**

Isaiah’s experience with God is a very unusual event. He describes it as an experience that influences⁷ all his senses. He sees the six-winged seraphim and God on His throne. He hears the seraphim’s thundering voices. He smells the smoke in the temple. And he feels and tastes the live coal the seraphim places on his lips (Isaiah 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 speech in Isaiah 6:5 is a confession⁸ of his sin and that of his people.



An angel places a live coal from the heavenly altar on Isaiah’s lips.

Why the focus on “unclean lips”? Was Isaiah’s and his people’s only sin that of what they spoke? What might that have been a symbol (word-picture) of? Read also Proverbs 13:3; Matthew 12:37; Luke 6:45.

As soon as Isaiah confesses, a seraph (six-winged angel) takes a live coal from the heavenly altar, flies with it to Isaiah, and touches it to his lips.

What happens in Isaiah 6:6, 7? What is symbolized (meant) 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 taken away. And he is made pure. The Hebrew word translated *purged* comes from the root *qaphar*, commonly translated in the Old Testament as “atone” or “atonement [forgiveness and cleansing]” (read Exodus 29:36; Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 16:30; Leviticus 17:11). The point is that Isaiah, without God’s action of cleansing him of his sin, 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

7. influences—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

8. confession—the act of telling God your sins and admitting to others what you have done wrong against them.

surrender (give to God) so that your sin can be cleansed?

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 23

“HERE I AM; SEND ME” (Isaiah 6:8)

When Isaiah hears the call from God, he quickly answers, “Here I am; send me” (Isaiah 6:8, NIV). Notice that Isaiah answers the call before he knows the details of his work (read also Hebrews 11:8).

Isaiah does not answer because he believes he has the necessary gifts and talents. He does not answer because he knows that he will do a good job. And he does not answer because it is a job that he likes (he does not even know what the task is). Isaiah knows that he is unworthy. But he knows God is worthy. He knows he is powerless, but God is all powerful. It may not be a mission he would have chosen for himself. But it is a mission God has chosen. And that is why Isaiah answers.

Read the Great Command to go and teach all nations. Perhaps it is the most important command in all of the Bible (Matthew 28:18–20). Read carefully the first part of this command. Why is this an important part that we must not overlook?

The “therefore” part is very important. The only reason we can go and

teach all nations is because we go in the power of God, who has all authority (power) in heaven and earth. If we had only our own strength, we could not go. If we depended 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 universe⁹ (read Acts 17:28; Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:16).

If we are willing, God gives us the power we need to do the mission He gives us. He makes pure Isaiah’s unclean lips (Isaiah 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). Jesus anoints¹⁰ Saul with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17, 18). He puts words in Jeremiah’s mouth (Jeremiah 1:9). Should we expect any less for ourselves, now at this important time in earth’s history?



Our mission is to preach the gospel to all nations of the earth.

9. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

10. anoints—to give someone the authority (power) to do God’s work; to choose someone and set him or her apart to do a special work for God.

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

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 24

ISAIAH’S CALL (Isaiah 6:9, 10)

Read God’s command to Isaiah (Isaiah 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 trying to make the people’s hearts and minds dull. But if you read the verses carefully, you would find a biting remark in them. God is always pleading with His people to listen to Him. He encourages the people to understand Him. He invites them to open their hearts to Him and to know Him. He tells them to look to Him, to return to Him, and to be healed by Him. But why would He say one thing and mean another?

Read Deuteronomy 30:6; Proverbs 2:5; Jeremiah 3:22; Jeremiah 4:1. How are we to understand these verses in light of the verses we have just seen in Isaiah 6:9, 10?

All through the Bible, God calls His

people to listen, to obey, to return to Him, and to be healed by Him. But we do know that many did not listen. So, what seems to be happening here is that God is just saying how the people will answer Isaiah. He is not saying what He wants to happen or what He will cause to happen. As the people continually refuse to accept Isaiah’s warnings, their hearts naturally become harder. But this does not mean that Isaiah or God wanted this to really happen. The whole Bible is a call of God to people to do all the things Isaiah said to do. But as we know, many do not.

What about us today? How different are we from the people in Isaiah’s time? Maybe there is not much we can do about others, but what about ourselves? How can we make sure we do not fall into the same spiritual trap as those pictured in Isaiah?

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 25

A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES (NON-JEWS) (Isaiah 42:6, 7)

Isaiah’s mission was far larger than just trying to reform¹¹ Judah. He also pictured Jerusalem as a light on a hill. The light was a witness to all nations about the one true God and His commandments (laws): “the mountain where the Lord’s temple is located will be famous. . . . All of the nations will go to it” (Isaiah 2:2, NIV).

11. reform—to change for the better.

How do we as Adventists understand our role in the outreach to the world? Read Revelation 14:6.

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

What does Isaiah 49:6 mean for us, as Seventh-day Adventists?



God calls us to be a light on a hill that draws all people to Him.

It was not until the late 1860s that the Seventh-day Adventist Church realized it had a mission to foreign lands. Early Adventists had thought the gospel command¹² would be limited only to the different people groups inside North America. America was a multicultural society,¹³ so early Adventists thought they were reaching out to every nation, race, and people with dif-

ferent languages at home. Arthur Spalding suggests that it was a “comforting way of thinking” for the early Adventist Church to believe that its mission was only to North America. —Adapted from Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1962), volume 2, page 193.

But it was not long before the young church realized that its understanding of the gospel command was too limited. So, it decided to spread out and establish the church in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Pacific, and all over the world. We, as individuals (persons), can be a part of this work one way or another today.

What are ways you, or even your local church, could be more involved in outreach? How can you bring “salvation¹⁴ unto the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47, KJV)?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 26

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Call of Isaiah,” pages 303–310, in *Prophets and Kings*.

“This promise of the final fulfillment of God’s purpose brought courage to the heart of Isaiah. What could earthly nations do to fight against Judah? What if the Lord’s messenger had to

12. gospel command—Jesus’ command to spread the gospel or the good news that He saves us from our sins and gives us eternal (forever) life.

13. multicultural society—having many different cultures or ways of life.

14. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

meet with those who were against him? Isaiah had seen the King, the Lord of hosts. He had heard the song of the seraphim [angels], ‘The whole earth is full of his glory’ [verse 3]. He had the promise that the messages of God to backsliding Judah would come with the power of the Holy Spirit. And the prophet was given courage to do the work before him. Throughout his long career and mission Isaiah 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. And he became bolder and still bolder in his prophecies¹⁵ of the future victory¹⁶ of the church.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, “The Call of Isaiah,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 11, 1915.

“The warnings of Isaiah to Judah to obey the living God did not fail. There were some who obeyed and turned from their idols [false gods] to the worship of God. They learned to find in their Maker [God] great love and mercy. And in the dark days of Judah’s history, only a small group was left in the land. But the prophet’s words were to continue bearing fruit in positive ways. Isaiah announced, ‘In days to come, men will look to their Maker for help. They will turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel’

(Isaiah 17:7, [NirV]).”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 320.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Why is a prophet never popular? Imagine if Isaiah came back to life and worked as a prophet to the Adventist Church. What do you think Isaiah would have to say? Would His message have changed? How do we think of Ellen G. White? Are many of us doing the same thing to her that many in Israel did to their own prophets? Discuss.

❷ Just what kind of work 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 God’s 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, thankless. It was also a mission that ended when people sawed Isaiah’s body in half. But through his ministry, Isaiah changed lives. And the power of his words is still felt today.

15. prophecies—messages from God that tell what will happen in the future.

16. victory—the act of winning the battle over, or winning the struggle against, something.