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Who Shall I Send? And Who Will Go For Us?

6: 8-10

Who shall I send? And who will go for us? **DIG:** Compare this verse with 6:5. What is significant about that? How is the trinity hinted at here? What did Isaiah know that the nation needed? What is Isaiah's new mission? What effect will it have on Judah? Is this what YHVH *wants* to happen, or an ironic statement of what God knows *will* happen? Compare Matthew 13:10-17 and Acts 28:26-27 with these verses. How do these passages of Scripture illuminate each other?

REFLECT: When have you given up, only to receive God's grace? Are you willing to serve anywhere, anytime? What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? John 12:40-41 relates this vision to Christ. How Jesus' glory like the suffering and healing Isaiah saw? How did John use these verses to show that the unbelief of the Jews and their rejection of Messiah actually fulfilled God's plan and purpose? Why has the LORD sent *you* to your world?

The removal of sin is always followed by the requirement of service. Commission always follows cleansing. We have been saved to serve.¹⁹ The rest of this chapter deals with the message **Isaiah** was to preach to **Y'hudah**. Significantly, he was not called to service until he had been cleansed. After hearing the seraph's words in **6:3** and **7**, **Isaiah** then **heard the voice of the LORD**.

Leonard Ravenhill (1907-1994), a British evangelist, once said, "The greatest miracle **God** can do today is take an unholy man out of an unholy world, make that man holy, then put him back into that unholy world and keep him holy in it." This seems to be what **the LORD** did to **Isaiah** when **He** commissioned **the prophet** to speak to **His** people.

Around the time of the death of Uzziah, one of **Judah's** more successful kings, **Isaiah** had a vision of **YHVH**. **The prophet** saw **Him** as the true **King** of the universe, sitting on a lofty throne. In the vision, **Isaiah** saw seraphim worshiping **ADONAI** with a hymn that praised **His** holiness, majesty, and glory.

Isaiah's vision of **God** led to a true vision of **himself** as unholy and broken before

Ha'Shem. Woe to me, he cried, **I am ruined (6:5)**. That recognition of sin led **him** to a need for and the reception of **ADONAI's** cleansing grace **(6:7)**. Newly cleansed, **Isaiah** was commissioned to spread **YHVH's** message **(6:9)**. **The LORD** sent **Isaiah** into an unholy world, not only to live a holy life but also to tell an unholy people about a holy **God**.

Ha'Shem speaks for the first time, and **He** uses **I** and **Us** in the same breath. **Then I heard the voice of ADONAI** saying: **Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us (6:8a)?** Here is one of the implications of plurality regarding **God** in the TaNaKh. But this is merely a foreshadowing, and not necessarily a proof.

The question: **"And who will go?"** does not mean **the LORD** did not know or that **He** only hoped someone would respond. **He** asked the question to give **Isaiah**, then cleansed, an opportunity for service. **The prophet** knew the entire nation needed the same kind of cleansing of sin that **he** had received. Then **he** responded without being asked or coerced.



It is as if **Isaiah** was not ready to hear these words before this moment. But **he** is neither directly addressed, nor forced into service. Perhaps it is because **Isaiah** did not need to be forced, but only needed the opportunity to serve. However, after seeing **his** true spiritual condition and then receiving the grace of **the LORD**, **Isaiah** was desperate to serve. **His** response is one word (Hebrew: *shaliach*) that translates: **Here am I. Send me (6:8b)**. **Note his ready and spontaneous acceptance of the divine mission even before its nature was revealed to him.** Those who need to be forced into service do not understand **God's** grace toward them. Unlike Adam and Eve who sought to hide from **Ha'Shem's** voice, **Isaiah** cannot keep silent. This is the way it is with those who have received the grace of **ADONAI** after giving up hope of ever being accepted by **Him**. It is not a matter of being able to repay **God**. We are incapable of that. It is a matter of wanting to please **Him**. It is a matter of love.

The sequence of events in **Isaiah's** life should not be overlooked. Each event leads to the next. The king's death prepares the way for the vision of **ADONAI**; the vision of **God** leads to self-despair; self-despair opens the door to cleansing; cleansing makes it possible to

recognize the possibility of service; and the climax is service to **the LORD Himself**.

After responding as **he** did in **6:8**, **Isaiah** probably thought that **his** calling would result in the cleansing of **the nation**. But after **he** volunteered to be **a prophet**, **he** was given a heartbreaking assignment. **ADONAI** declared: **Go and tell this people, "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving" (6:9)**. This saying would have been a contradiction in the Hebrew mind. Normally, to hear was synonymous with understanding and doing (**Deuteronomy 1:43, 6:3**). But here, **Isaiah** is saying that the disease of pride and rebellion was so pervasive that **the Israelites** would simply fail to comprehend the truth of what **they** heard. The use of these verses in the New Covenant makes them especially important to understand (**Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10** and **Acts 28:26-27**). **Yeshua** quoted part of this verse to explain that **Y'hudah** in **His** day *could* not believe because they *would* not believe (**John 12:40**).

Tragically, **Isaiah** was to warn **the people** of **Judah** with no positive response. In other words, **he** was commissioned to **go** and have an unsuccessful ministry. Perhaps **Isaiah** hoped that by serving **the LORD**, **the nation** might be cleansed. But **he** is told to go to a **people** who would be unable to understand what **he** had to say. **The people** had not listened before and **they** would not listen now. In fact, **they** would become even *more calloused* against **God** after hearing the message from **His prophet**.

But these verses also reveal that **Isaiah's** message had a different purpose. Here we come to the heart of **God's** commission. The preaching of **ADONAI's prophet** would not make it easier for **the people** to believe and repent; it would make it *more* difficult. **Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed (6:10)**.

But why would **God** desire to harden **the hearts** of **His people**? Why would **He** not want **them** to be healed? It is evident that something is more important here than healing. If **Isaiah** were faithful to **his** calling and declared the holiness of **ADONAI**, it would only harden **his** generation in its rebellion (**3:8-9; 5:18-19**). **The prophet** couldn't water down **God's** truth, which would be a mockery. For what can heal except **the LORD's** truth? **He** couldn't try to salvage **his** generation at the expense of future generations. But if the truth could not save the present generation, if it would, in fact, destroy that generation, it could, if faithfully recorded, *save future generations*. This then was **Isaiah's** commission, as it is with all servants of **God**. Not to merely be successful in a human sense, but to be *faithful*. What was true in **Isaiah's** day is true today: some listen, but even though most refuse to listen,

we must still spread the gospel (**Ezeki'el 3:11**).²⁰

The hearts of God's people, synonymous with their minds or understanding, would be **calloused** in three ways. First, **they** are without feeling for any work of divine grace. Secondly, **they** are unable to listen. Thirdly, **they** have no ability to see. The result is spiritual blindness, deafness and spiritual death. The reason **they** are being hardened so much is that **they** might repent and be healed. **God** can only tolerate sin for so long. Because of **Israel's** continual hardening, now they will be hardened for good so that **their** punishment can be assured, but future generations could be saved.

The fulfillment of Isaiah's warning came in three ways. First, was the judgment of **the Babylonian Captivity**, just as **he** had promised (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). Secondly, when **Jesus** came the masses would not accept **His** clear and simple teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount, so **He** spoke to them in **parables** that they could not understand (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Er - That Same Day He Spoke to Them in Parables**). Thirdly, **He** gave **the gift of languages** to the early messianic community (see the commentary on **Acts Al - The Ruach ha-Kodesh Comes at Shavu'ot**). This gift was observable in a dramatic way on the festival of Shavu'ot, and continued during the apostolic age from time to time as a testimony against those who would not believe. Like the parables, those of faith would be able to understand them and those without faith could not. **The Ruach Ha'Kodesh** tells us that **tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers (First Corinthians 14:21-22)**. Therefore, the **LORD** gave **His** truth to **Y'hudah** in simple, clear teaching that was ignored, and then **He** spoke in parables that were meaningless riddles without faith. Finally, **He** spoke in unintelligible languages that could not be understood without translation.

Some have wondered if these verses remove people from responsibility for personal sin. The answer is certainly not! While **ADONAI** is sovereign over sin and belief, **people** are always responsible for **their** actions because **God** has given to us the ability to choose (**Genesis 2:16-17, 4:6-10; Jeremiah 36:3-7; Ezeki'el 18; John 7:17**). The sovereignty of **the LORD** never abolishes human responsibility. No, **YHVH** was offering here **the sinful nation** was forgiveness and blessing on the basis of repentance (**Isaiah 1:16-20**). But **they** had persistently refused . . . and **God, the Spirit of God** is a **Gentleman**. **He** will not kick down the door of your heart if you refuse to open it. As a result, this generation of **Jews** would be under judgment, and the words of **Isaiah** would only serve to harden **their** hearts and confirm **their** unbelief. The same sun that softens wax, hardens clay. Through the pain of **Isaiah** we can learn a valuable lesson. Many times, by the grace of **ADONAI**, our



ministries are successful; but sometimes, like **Isaiah**, all **God** asks of us is to be faithful.