

***Agents of Hope: God's Great Missionaries***  
***"Here Am I! Send Me": The Prophet Isaiah***

Lesson #13 for September 27, 2008

Scriptures: Leviticus 16:30; 17:11; Isaiah 6:1-10; 49:6; Jeremiah 3:22; Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 1:2.

1. This lesson is about the "call" and the meaning of that "call" given to the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah received a number of visions and messages from God which included a message about the Devil and how he had fallen from heaven. (Isaiah 14:12-15)
2. Isaiah lived in Judah during the years when the northern kingdom of Israel was collapsing and was finally overrun by the Assyrian army in 723/722 B.C. The enemies of Judah and Israel were camped only a few miles from Jerusalem. Israel's kings had become totally corrupt. Judah's king had taken upon himself the role of a priest—entering into the temple and offering incense on the altar which only a priest was allowed to do. God "struck" him with leprosy. It was a time when almost every indication pointed toward disaster. In the midst of all that corruption, God appeared in a vision to Isaiah. When the Assyrians attacked, Jerusalem was saved as 185,000 Assyrians soldiers were killed. (2 Kings 19:35)
3. Read Isaiah 6:1-10; 49:6. At a time when things seemed to be "closing in" on the few true children of God who were left in the kingdom of Judah, why would God give Isaiah a vision suggesting he should carry a message to all nations?
4. Try to imagine the experience of Isaiah as it is depicted in Isaiah 6:1-6. What do you think was God's purpose in giving Isaiah a view of the throne room of heaven? From the description of Isaiah, it seems as if it was a total body experience!
5. What was Isaiah's response? How would you compare the response of Isaiah to those of the children of Israel when God spoke to them at Sinai (Exodus 20:18-20), Manoah and his wife (Judges 13:22), Job after God had spoken to him (Job 42:5,6), Ezekiel after God appeared to him in a vision (Ezekiel 1:28-2:1), and the apostle John after he saw God in vision (Revelation 1:17). Repeatedly in Scripture when God or even an angel from heaven appeared to a human being, the human collapsed and fell to the ground in fear and adoration. God responded by telling that person to stand up so they could speak as friends. How would you compare those experiences with the experience of Isaiah? Why do you suppose the appearance of an angel or even God Himself in vision has caused that reaction in human beings? How do you think you would respond if you saw an angel or a vision of God? Was it the sheer brightness? Was it the shock? Or was it just the surprise? Why doesn't God just use angels to finish the spreading of the gospel? Couldn't they do a better job than we do? If God or His angels began speaking to human beings on a regular basis, who do you think would demand equal time? And when the Devil and his angels began accosting us, how would we know which "supernatural being" it was that was speaking to us?
6. Why do you think Isaiah responded as he did? Notice that he said, "Here am I! Send me," before he even had an idea of what God wanted him to do. Was that a wise thing to do?

Should Isaiah have asked for clarification and for further information? Was Isaiah praying for a special experience?

7. Isaiah came from a family of priests and was already considered a religious leader in the country. Why do you think God thought it was necessary that Isaiah have that additional experience?
8. As you look over the situation in Isaiah's day and the effect of Isaiah's ministry, would you consider him a success? Was Isaiah ever able to reach out to the Gentiles? Remember that at the end of Isaiah's life as Manasseh ascended to the throne of Judah, Isaiah was forced into a hollow log and sawed in two! Do you think the messages of Isaiah were primarily for the people in his day? Or were his messages intentionally meant for people in later generations? How would we know? Does God take responsibility for the results of His calls?
9. Was Isaiah's response an emotional one? Was he just overwhelmed by God's presence? He saw, he heard, he smelled, he felt, and he even tasted God's call! Did Isaiah's messages have greater impact because he could say, "I have seen the LORD"?
10. Why do you think God specifically focused on "unclean lips"? There are many passages in Scripture suggesting that the mouth speaks what the heart—or mind—is filled with. (Proverbs 13:3; Matthew 12:37; Luke 6:45)
11. Read James 3:1-12. If that is a correct picture of the basic nature of the human "tongue" and the mind behind it, is it any wonder that God touched Isaiah's lips with a coal from the "altar"?
12. Read Isaiah 1:10-18. How do you think Isaiah's speech changed as a result of the anointing and the call? Compare Isaiah 40:1,2. When Isaiah's lips were touched by the coal from the altar, did that prevent him from speaking words that were untrue or unfaithful in the future? Was Isaiah's whole character changed by that experience?
13. What actually happened when Isaiah was "made right" with God? Does God do that to a lot of people? Could He do it for everybody? Was Isaiah asking for a change? Was God overriding Isaiah's freedom? If God's goal is to get us to think things through thoroughly and make an intelligent decision about Him, shouldn't He have set up a school where people could be educated instead of this overwhelming experience that Isaiah received? Didn't Isaiah already have a close experience with God?
14. If a "call" came to you in a remarkable way as did the "call" to Isaiah and you were certain that God was responsible for the "call," would you agree to move forward even if you did not know exactly what God had in mind? Abraham did something similar. (Hebrews 11:8) Are we asked to do such a thing also? What is implied by the command to "go and teach all nations"? (Matthew 28:18-20) Is God asking every one of His children to travel the world and to be a missionary?
15. Have you ever believed that the gospel commission in Matthew 28 is specifically a call to you? In what way have you responded?
16. There are many examples of people who were called to challenging but exciting missions in Scripture. In our day does God ask us just to "witness" where we are? If we speak about God to our work associates and those we work for or associate with, is that fulfilling the

commission in Matthew 28?

17. Isaiah was called during a time of crisis in the land. Is it easier to respond to a call during a time of crisis than in a time of relative peace?
18. Was the vision of the throne room of God in heaven just for Isaiah's benefit? Or does God ask each one of us to envision that experience for ourselves?
19. Why do you think the angels kept calling out, "Holy, holy, holy"? A similar message is repeated in Revelation 4:1-11. Why do you think God pictures Himself surrounded by beings who constantly cry, "Holy, holy, holy"? Wouldn't you get tired of that after a short time? What is the basic meaning of "holy"? What are those creatures really saying? Is that just a way to praise God for everything that He has done?
20. Other individuals also had unusual encounters with God. Consider the case of Elijah (God spoke with "the sound of a small silence" - 1 Kings 19:11-13), Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:28-37), the women at the tomb (Matthew 28:5-10), and Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-9; Acts 22:6-16; Acts 26:12-18). What differences and what similarities do you see in those encounters?
21. God told Isaiah that the response to his mission was going to be a very discouraging one. (Isaiah 6:9,10) Many versions of the Bible even seem to suggest that God is the one responsible for making men's hearts "hard" and for making them not want to listen, etc. Other verses in the Bible suggest an opposite picture. (Exodus 9:34-10:1, *KJV*; Deuteronomy 30:6; Proverbs 2:5; Jeremiah 3:22; Jeremiah 4:1) Surely, no Christian who has some general understanding of the themes of Scripture can doubt that God is making every possible appeal to us to come back to Him. So, why does He seem to suggest in Isaiah that it is virtually impossible for the people to have a proper response? How do we become "blind" and unresponsive to God's appeals?
22. Today, our church organization focuses on successful campaigns. When someone goes to a new area and holds a series of meetings and hundreds or even thousands are baptized, it gets "front-page billing." Do you think the experience of Isaiah would even rate a mention in any of our church papers today? Would we question the veracity of Isaiah's call if he included the message from God as recorded in Isaiah 6:9,10?
23. Jesus quotes those verses from Isaiah when talking about the people's response in His day. (John 12:37-41) That occurred at the very end of His ministry to the Jewish people. Was He trying to tell them that the whole experience was a failure?
24. If God were calling a "modern-day Isaiah" or sending Jesus once again to His church today, what would He say about us?
25. The book of Isaiah is a wonderful presentation of some of the most important truths about God. While Isaiah 1-39 might seem to be quite discouraging, Isaiah 40-55 tells us wonderful things about God—contrasting the "real God" from all the phoney's—and Isaiah 56-66 gives us wonderful promises for the future and marvelous pictures of heaven. Do those messages still seem appropriate for us in our day?

26. Isaiah was one of only a few prophets who clearly saw something of the great controversy between Lucifer/Satan and God. (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Revelation 12:1-12) Do those insights help us to realize that God's mission in the great controversy is something more than winning a few "souls" to the Adventist church? Which is more important: "winning" many people into our church or God succeeding in the great controversy? Is it important for us to spread the truth about the great controversy to other church members and to nonmembers who do not understand that background theme of the Bible?
27. Does understanding the great controversy and what is going on behind the scenes help you to understand many of the stories in Scripture? Why is it that so few people seem to have any idea about the great controversy and its implications? What can we do to change that? There are many stories in the Bible that only make sense in light of the great controversy.
28. Have we turned the gospel into a selfish enterprise: what has God done for me?

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