

CREATOR, CREATURE, COMMISSION

Isaiah 6:1-10

Next to worshipping the living God, the second most important thing we can do is to involve ourselves in world evangelism. Our missions conference helps prepare us spiritually and mentally to reach a lost and dying world for Christ. How we react to what we have heard the last two days will determine if we are thinking about missions in the same way as Christ Himself thinks about missions. Until we see the world as Christ sees it, we will never get excited about missions.

Did you know there are 850 million Muslims in the world and the vast majority of them have never heard the true gospel? Who is going to tell them about Christ? Did you know that only 8% of the western missionaries work among the Hindus, Chinese and Muslims who make up more than 50% of the world's population? Who is going to tell them about Christ? Did you know that there are still 2,000 tribes or cultural groupings that do not have any part of the Bible in their language or dialect? Who is going to tell them about Christ through the printed page? Did you know that 95% of all the pastors in the two-thirds world have no formal education in the Bible? Who is going to train these national pastors? Did you know that the developing countries are now sending more missionaries into the world than all the western world? Who is going to help these developing countries with the needed resources to accomplish the task? Did you know that God is mightily at work in this world and multiple millions are coming to Christ? Who is going to get behind this mighty work with prayer?

This is why we have a missions conference. We need to be reminded that all of us are under commission from Almighty God to reach the world for Christ. The local church is all about missions – missions in your city, missions in your state, missions in the USA and missions in the world. When a local church loses its vision for missions, it loses its very reason for existence.

REMARKS ABOUT ISAIAH THE PROPHET

Isaiah means “Jehovah is salvation.” He was a prophet sent by God to Judah, the Southern Kingdom of Israel, to preach judgment on a nation. Isaiah was an Old Testament missionary. The Southern Kingdom was going apostate. Judah was in spiritual decline. There was moral, political, social and spiritual corruption throughout the land. The heart of the corruption stemmed from a spiritual deficiency. The nation did not know the God of Scripture. Because the nation was in rebellion to God, spiritual apostasy ran rampant.

Isaiah preached to the nation the message of “Jehovah is salvation,” but only a few responded. The first few years of his ministry hardly anyone turned to God. It is like preaching the gospel to the modern western world of Europe, Canada and America – the truth falls on indifferent and deaf ears.

Apparently Isaiah became defeated, discouraged and could not understand why God had not brought revival to the nation. Isaiah put his eyes on himself and off the Lord and began to feel sorry for himself. Therefore, God graciously gave Isaiah a vision of the God who had called him for service. This is what Isaiah 6 is all about – God revealing Himself anew to Isaiah who had become discouraged in his ministry. God did not give Isaiah a lecture on how to be a better missionary or belittle him for not praying more or working harder. No, he was given a vision of the sovereign God of the universe. When he saw God, he knew nothing was impossible and he gave himself without reserve to the task God had given him to do.

CREATOR (6:1-4)

The Prophet Sees The Sovereignty Of God (6:1). In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Isaiah saw the Lord. This is the word Adonai which means “the Mighty One” or “Sovereign Master.” Adonai comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to determine, to command, to rule.” Therefore, what Isaiah saw was the One who determines all things, the One who commands all things, the One who rules over all things. Isaiah had a fresh view of God’s sovereignty. He saw God who controls all events and is Master of the destinies of all men.

Isaiah saw the Sovereign One sitting upon a throne. It was a kingly throne, which is a picture of God who rules all things and all persons. This God was “high and exalted.” These are words of majesty and praise and describe the Sovereign God on His throne.

The “train of His robe” literally filled the temple. This was undoubtedly a red, kingly robe. The Hebrew word picture here is that the red robe filled every area of the temple. As far as the human eye could see, the red, kingly robe was everywhere. Why? Because God is King over events and people. God is sovereign over creation: *The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths (Psalm. 135:6).* God is sovereign over political events: *He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning (Daniel 2:21).* God is sovereign over men: *All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?” (Daniel 4:35).* God is sovereign over all history: *Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will to all that I please (Isaiah 46:9-10).*

Isaiah had to get a proper perspective of God. He had to come into a better understanding of the God who reigns. He would soon be called to preach judgment to a wicked nation. Therefore, he had to know God had a purpose for all things, including his life. Christians must come into a realization that God is on the throne and is working all things for His own glory. Every Christian must understand who God is and what He is doing. He is sovereign over events, nations and men. When we see God in control of the world, we understand that His plan for world missions is

right on schedule and we can be a part of that plan by doing what we can to see the world evangelized.

As I pray for the different countries of the world, sometimes I get very discouraged because evangelization seems so impossible. I read that this country is 100% Muslim, or another country is 90% communist, or another country is 97% Roman Catholic or another country is 94% Buddhist or another country is 58% spiritist. The task seems so ominous, but my thoughts always come back to a sovereign God with whom nothing is impossible.

Things that seem impossible to us are not impossible to God. While in Jordan, I heard a wonderful true story that shows how God does the humanly impossible. The countries surrounding the Persian Gulf in the Middle East are primarily Muslim and have closed their doors to Christianity. Yet, God is getting a witness to the Royal families and high government officials who make the rules against Christianity. In the gulf there are 40,000 Filipinos who have temporary working permits to be nannies, house boys, ground keepers, etc. Many of these Filipinos are dedicated Christians and are fearless for their faith. The Royal families and the government workers hire these Filipinos because they are excellent at what they do. The nannies are witnessing to the Royal families' children and the house boys are speaking boldly for Christ. The Muslims like the Filipinos for their work but also because they teach their children about God and pray with their children – Muslims are concerned about the morals of their children. About a year ago, a Filipino house boy had his head cut off for boldly witnessing for Christ. Did this deter the Filipinos? No, it made them even stronger witnesses. You see, my friends, nothing is impossible with God!

The Prophet Sees The Holiness Of God (6:2-4): *Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory," At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*

The Seraphs means “burning ones.” The Seraphs were guardians of the holiness of God and they were burning because they were reflecting God’s holiness. They were beside not above the throne. No creature, whether angelic or human, is above God.

The radiance of God’s holiness was so great that the angelic beings had to cover themselves with their wings. Full exposure to God’s holiness would bring immediate disintegration. Therefore, protection was needed. The angels called to one another, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” God is holy. He is perfect without the slightest taint of sin. He is absolute purity. There is not one defect in His whole being. God is faultless, spotless, impeccable and unblemished. God’s holiness makes Him shine brighter than a thousand suns.

The Trinity is intimated in the three words, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” The Apostle John tells us that Isaiah actually saw the preincarnate Christ. *For this reason they could not believe, because Isaiah says elsewhere: “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.” Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him (John 12:29-31).*

As Christians, we are to be holy like God is holy. All Christians are commanded, “*Be holy, because I am holy*” (1 Pet. 1:15). This is our goal but we all fall short of this goal in actual life. According to Ephesians 1:4, we have been chosen by God to be holy. In 1 Thessalonians 4:7, we are told that God called us to salvation for holiness of life. God does not ask us to be holy. He commands it. He also graciously provides the confession of sin as a means of attaining forgiveness when we fail to be holy.

We must see God and His holiness before we can see our own sinfulness and need for holiness. If a Christian once gets a glimpse of God’s holiness through spiritual eyes, he will see his own wretchedness and hunger to be more like the God he loves. His attitude will not be what can I keep in my life but what must go in my life to meet God’s standard of holiness. When one sees God, he will say, “Take this from me and this, and this. In light of Your holiness, I cannot stand my sin!” Those who have seen God’s holiness and seek holiness of life will have a desire for world

missions. Their hearts will beat where Christ's heart beats – for a lost a dying world. There will be a longing to see men and women, boys and girls truly saved. They will want to see not just their children saved but people of every race, culture and color and their children saved.

CREATURE (6:5-7)

The Prophet Sees Himself (6:5): *“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”*

When the prophet sees God's sovereignty and holiness, he cries out, “Woe to me!” or “A curse on me!” He then says, “I am ruined!” “Ruined” means “cut off, undone, destroyed.” Isaiah, when he saw God, thought he should be cut off or struck dead because he was so sinful. A holy God can have no fellowship with sinful man. It was only God's grace that spared Isaiah.

The Hebrew word order is interesting and goes like this: “Because a man of unclean lips I am.” The emphasis being upon a man. Isaiah knew he was a sinful creature and deserved the judgment of God. Isaiah must have become convicted about his own lifestyle and how he had been personally affected by the perverted morality of his day. He must have also been convicted about his discouragement and apathy in preaching to a nation that really hated God. We must remember that ministers and missionaries are but men, sinful men saved by grace, who wrestle in the spiritual battle with the world, flesh and the devil like all men. We must also remember how in America our perverted culture has twisted our thinking – materialism, pleasure, sex, tolerance, and no absolutes. A twisted view of the world gives a Christian a poor understanding of world missions. Americans do not need more teaching on missions. We need repentance of a lifestyle that is keeping us from viewing the world as Christ views it.

Notice also the order of recognition of sin. Isaiah first sees his own sin: “For I am a man of unclean lips,” and then he sees the sin of others, “And I live among a people of unclean lips.” A vision of God gives a man a clear view of himself and others. We must see God before we can see what we really are – vile, polluted,

debased, sinful, impure, void of any righteousness of our own. When a person gets a glimpse of God, his life is changed. Job, who was called “blameless and upright,” when he saw God said, “My ears have heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Daniel was called a man “highly esteemed” but when he saw God, he said, “I bowed my face towards the ground and was speechless. . . I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. . . My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.” The Apostle John was called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” but when he saw a vision of Christ, he “fell at his feet as though dead.” When we see our sinfulness, we realize we are but men, servants of the living God. We have no right, no claims on God, and we see our responsibility to world missions. We sense our accountability to God for a lost and dying world. We become aware of our indifference to the Great Commission. We see how we have failed to evangelize the world through prayer, giving and going. We all need to sense our coldness of heart towards a lost world. Perhaps we have said to ourselves, “Why do we need to give money to people over seas when there is so much need in America?” Perhaps we have held back on our missions giving because we wanted some unneeded material things. Perhaps we never have prayed for a missionary or been involved in missions in any way. We need a vision of a big God. We need a cleansing from God. We need to come to grips with our attitude about missions and missionaries. We need to get back to basics: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well* (Matthew 6:33).

The Prophet Receives God’s Cleansing (6:6-7): *Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”*

Upon acknowledgment of his sin, God, using angels as intermediate agents, cleanses the prophet. Every man, sinner and saint alike, need cleansing. The sinner needs initial cleansing to start him on the road to heaven. The saint needs daily cleansing for service. The prophet recognized his sin and he was cleansed. He applied I John 1:9: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify (cleanse) us from all unrighteousness.”* When a Christian is not in fellowship with his Lord, he loses the joy of salvation; he loses the fellowship of

Christ; he loses confidence in prayer and there is a doubting of salvation. There is apathy towards Christ and His program for this world. If we have been cold hearted or indifferent or selfish or ignorant about missions, we need to confess this because missions is the very heartbeat of Jesus Christ. We do not need more knowledge on missions; we do not need more sermons on missions; we do not need more money for missions – we have all that. We need repentance for apathy about missions; we need confession about our indifference to a lost world; we need cleansing from Christ so we can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

COMMISSION (6:8)

God's Call (6:8a): *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"* After the cleansing, then God takes the initiative to call the prophet, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The "us" again is a reference to the Trinity. Isaiah's confession brings God into action. After cleansing, God begins to reveal Himself to the prophet. Jesus makes a promise to all Christians that He will make Himself known in a special way to those who chose to obey Him: *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him (John 14:21).*

Isaiah's Response (6:8b): *And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"* As God cleanses and reveals Himself to the prophet, Isaiah has a definite response. There was no questioning or reasoning. He knew if God called, God would empower him for the task. He says, "Here am I." The prophet was willing to go. Then he says, "Send me." The prophet was ready to go. He was eager to do God's will. Why? He had seen God; he had been cleansed, and now He must go in obedience.

Has God spoken to you about missions today? Have you said, "Here I am. Send me!" Some of us will be called by God to bodily go to the mission field. Most of us will stay home to pray, give and encourage missionaries. We must be dedicated to this task of world evangelism, for this is the moral, revealed and directive will of God for every Christian. All Christians are called to support missions and some are called to go to the foreign field. All Christians are missionaries, and some Christians serve Christ in another country.

As we come to the close of this missions conference, each you should be in prayer that God will use this time to cause you to know Christ better, to conform you to Him more completely and to serve Him with deeper love and commitment. This week you should be repenting and confessing, asking God what role you will play in world missions.

The theme of this conference is “To whom much is given, much is required.” Before you get all excited about what you can do for missions, first think about your attitude towards Christ and His view of missions. Do you have Christ’s attitude towards and lost and dying world? As you view the world through Christ’s eyes, there will never be any problem of finding things to do for Christ and His kingdom.

This week you should be asking God what He would have you give by way of finances to missions. And you should be praying that Christ will reveal Himself to you very directly about world missions. You should be asking God if He wants you to go to the mission field —young or old. Ask God to give you grace in whatever it takes to be involved in world missions.

After this missions conference, you may be able to say, “Here I am Lord, cause me to pray more for missionaries!” You may be able to say, “Here I am Lord, increase my faith so I can give more money to missions so a Christless world may come to know Him who to know is eternal life.” You may be able to say, “Here I am Lord, send me to another country. I’m your servant and I will go any place in the world, face any hardship, make any sacrifices necessary to see a lost and dying world come to Christ. Can you honestly say, “Here I am (I’m willing); send me (I’m ready?” Put away your fears. As God calls, He will give you the power to fulfill the task. Whether that task is leaving your comfortable life in America and going to serve somewhere in a foreign land. Whether that task is giving up precious time in order to pray for missionaries. Whether that task is setting aside your self-centeredness that loves material things in order to give sacrificially to world missions.

God called me at 63 and Carol at 61 to start Equipping Pastors International. He called. He has given power. He has given contacts. He has met our financial

needs. When God starts something, He finishes it. What has God started in your life through this missions conference? Whatever He started, He will finish it!