



Study 1 : "Who Will Go For Us"

(Isaiah 6:1-8)

Sunday, September 6, 2009

BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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Introducing the Study

When we hear the word "prophet" we immediately think of "foretelling the future." So closely is the word aligned with the concept that we can hardly conceive of "prophet" having any other association.

The Prophets of Israel did tell what the future held, especially about the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, ... and in remarkable detail. But this was not their primary task.

They were, first above all else, God's ambassadors to us -
charged with FAITHFULLY COMMUNICATING all that God had revealed of his heart & mind.

Today's Study takes us to a specific time in the life of the prophet Isaiah in order to demonstrate the above truth ... and to the New Testament to illustrate from Paul's understanding of his own ministry that we have been called to the exact same task.

A. THE YEAR THAT KING UZZIAH DIED

1. A BIT OF HISTORY

Uzziah was only 16 when he became Judah's King. He reigned for 51 years from 792BC. Although 2Kings15:3 sums up his reign as one who "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD," Uzziah did not end well. A short history of his reign is found in 2Chron26, which also tells us that in later life, pride overtook him and he attempted to take the place of the priests in worship and was struck ill with leprosy. He lived out his days in seclusion and his son, Jotham, governed as Regent in his place.

2Chron26:22 notes that "the other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz." This record is lost, but we may assume that Isaiah had a special interest in Uzziah. Why was Isaiah at worship in the Temple at his death?

Out of respect for the King? ... and also, CONCERN. What would the new King be like?

As absolute monarch, the fortunes of his people were in his hands. But as he "reigned on David's throne," he was responsible to God who gave his throne its legitimacy. Would he be a man of faith and an example ... a true leader, a man "after God's heart" ... or would he lead his people away from trust in the God who had rescued his forebears from slavery in Egypt?

2. CALLED TO BE A PROPHET

And so, on Uzziah's death, Isaiah was at worship ... and something extraordinary happened.

I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high & exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. **Is6:1**

2a. The Character Of God. Isaiah describes an awesome vision of God that stresses his HOLINESS and MAJESTY, culminating with the angels' song:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." **Isaiah 6:3**

This was not a vision of a holy God remote and unconcerned for people :

I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" ... He said,
"Go and tell this people ... **Isaiah 6:8-9**

Yes, this was a Holy God, but one who was with his people and who would not abandon them:

Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you. **Is12:6**

2b. The Commissioning. Isaiah was given a specific role : God's REPRESENTATIVE (Ambassador)

"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" **Isaiah 6:8**

... with a specific task: To SPEAK God's word Go and tell this people ... **Isaiah 6:9**

2c. The Qualifications?

A realisation of SIN personal and corporate

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. **Isaiah 6:5**

God's FORGIVENESS: your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. **Isaiah 6:7**

B. THE PROPHET'S TASK

1. CONTENT OF THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE

Under 2b, over, we noted Isaiah's task was to speak on behalf of God. Specifically:

Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving. **Isaiah 6:9**

But hearing, understanding, seeing, and perceiving what? Note that in these verses, until the end of Chapter 6, there is no specific message. So what was it's content? The first 5 Chapters of Isaiah, which come before the account of his commissioning as a prophet, are the summary / sample of Isaiah's preaching. These chapters are "bookmarked" by two complimentary statements:

They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. **Isaiah 1:4** and ...

... they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel. **Isaiah 5:24**

What do all these verses (6:9, 1:4 & 5:24) have in common?

They refer to something ALREADY available that people should have KNOWN.

The PERSON of God (Isaiah 1:4) - as revealed through the EXODUS experience

"I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. **Isaiah 1:2**

I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counsellors as at the beginning. **Isaiah 1:26**

And the WORD of God (Isaiah 5:24) - specifically, "the law of the Lord" given through Moses.

When Moses went and told the people all the LORD'S words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." **Exodus 24:3**

2. SUMMARY OF A PROPHET'S MESSAGE

Whilst a Prophet may have a specific Word from God in a particular situation, generally his message must be consistent with what has already been revealed about God through the Exodus:

If a prophet ... appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet.

It is the LORD you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet ... must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. ... from **Deut13:1-5**

A Prophet's Message applied the Law of God and related the Character of God to:

RELATIONSHIPS between people,

the WORSHIP of God

DIPLOMATIC issues with surrounding nation

FUTURE blessings and judgements

C. A NEW TESTAMENT PARALLEL

The Christian Church is not the physical nation of Israel in the Old Testament, so there will not be an exact parallel in all circumstances but a principle remains:

God ... gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ... from **2Cor5:18-21**

We, too, are called to speak on God's behalf. Speak what? For us, the NORMATIVE message is the PERSON and WORK of Jesus. In telling others of the Good News about Jesus, we may do so with the full authority and confidence of "Hear the Word of the Lord." ... just like the prophets of old.