

## TCC Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2014 – Changed, commissioned, committed – Isaiah 6

### **Title: “Changed, commissioned, committed”**

**Purpose:** To see what happens when a person truly comes face-to-face with God

- Changed - Saved
- Commissioned - Sent
- Committed - Spent

### **Introduction**

#### I’d love to know

I’D LOVE TO KNOW if he saw it coming. If, when he woke up in the morning, he felt something special in the air.

WHAT WE DO KNOW is that it took place sometime in the year when King Uzziah died which was 740BC.

AND WHAT WE ALSO KNOW is that it TOTALLY CHANGED HIS LIFE.

#### Isaiah 6

This chapter, that we come to this morning, is all about what happened to Isaiah when he SAW THE LORD and I think it is fair to say that he was never the same again.

#### A very compact chapter

I think it fair to say that this chapter is very COMPACT and weighing in at just 13 verses, there is very little fat on this chapter, everything here has an important contribution to make and so we will try not to skip over too much, if possible.

#### Strange start

By way of preliminaries – let me say three things, three things which are a little UNEXPECTED:

- FIRST OF ALL – this is the chapter where Isaiah tells us about how he came to be commissioned as a prophet, BUT he doesn’t do this right at the start (as, for example Jeremiah does).

It seems that the first 5 chapters of Isaiah are not in strictly chronological order – so:

Q. Why might this be?

Well – I think Isaiah wants to show, as of first importance, something of the problem that is prevailing in Israel, the dilemma of the very dilapidated spiritual state of God’s people Israel.

And now having done this he wants to show something of the solution that God provides in the form of his own life story – the account of his calling and commissioning.

- THE SECOND THING THAT IS SURPRISING – is where we have Isaiah dating the happenings of this chapter by way of the death of a king RATHER than by the reign, or coronation, of a king. (In fact, this is not the only time Isaiah does this – it also happens in chapter 14 verse 28 – but this is rather unusual).

So again the question is Q. Why?

And these are not just totally unimportant questions, or questions that we don't have any hope of answering.

The answer becomes a bit clearer when we know something of King Uzziah.

The opening verses of 2 Chronicles 26 (verses 3-5) give us some helpful data:

“Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother’s name was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.”

So he had a very promising start and he really knew God’s attendant blessing.

If only the end was the same as the beginning – but it wasn’t. The other end of that chapter

2 Chronicles 26 verses 16-21 reads:

“But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the Lord followed him in. They confronted him and said, “It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord God.”

Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord’s temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the Lord had afflicted him.

King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house—leprous, and excluded from the temple of the Lord. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.”

So you see, at one level, whilst Uzziah was still alive, perhaps the mounting threat from Assyria was being safely ignored and perhaps people were still clinging onto the better material days that had been a part of Uzziah’s long reign.

But also it is a reminder of what can happen when we have a HEAD-ON CLASH with God.

- ONE LAST THING – that is also unusual/significant in some way, is this word Lord in Verse 1 “I saw the Lord...”

Sometimes in the OT this word **LORD** is all in capitals and this means **Yahweh** – God’s covenant name, His personal name.

But here it is **Lord** and that is the **Hebrew** word **Adonai** – and it is really his Title, and it is from a root word which means “to rule” and so it can be translated as **Sovereign** OR **owner** OR **master** OR **someone who controls things**.

And this title helps us to be clearer about who it was that Isaiah was beholding on that occasion when he says that he “saw the Lord”. Jesus is called Lord of Lords and King of Kings and in John’s gospel and chapter 12 this very chapter is quoted and then there is a summary statement given in:

Verse 41 (which reads) “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.”

### The chapter arrangement

The arrangement of this short chapter is conveniently arranged around the 3 responses that Isaiah makes. As **Alec Motyer** says in his landmark commentary on Isaiah:

“...he structure the account around three responses which he (that is Isaiah) made, “**and I said**” (which in the Hebrew is the phrase) “**wa’omar**” there in verses 5 and 8 and 11.”

- Now the FIRST RESPONSE is by way of **an exclamation**
- and the SECOND TWO come in the form of **questions**

So for our time we are going to follow the natural shape that the text gives us – 3 headings – the first is:

## **1] CHANGED (Verse 5)**

### What Isaiah saw

And I want to look at what exactly Isaiah saw.

This vision that so marked out Isaiah as a changed man, a vision that although unique to Isaiah, is a vision that we may have in some measure ourselves and which can likewise be something life changing for us.

### God’s glory

It is clear that what Isaiah saw was above and beyond anything that he had ever encountered before – we have in view a great throne and this is a throne even more glorious than the one that Solomon had made for himself – perhaps you remember his throne it had 6 steps up to the seat which was inlaid with ivory and overlaid with gold – and on both sides of each step there was a lion. Apparently nothing had ever been made like it.

But this throne of God was **HIGH & EXALTED** because God himself is **HIGH & EXALTED**.

In fact this very same phrase is used of the Lord’s Servant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Isaiah, of Jesus the Messiah there in:

**Isaiah 52 and verse 13** "See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and **lifted up and highly exalted.**"

It was this same Solomon who said of God:

(2 Chronicles 6v18) "But will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"

And we see here the reality of this as just **the train of His Robe** is filling the temple. Here we have anthropomorphic language being used to just try and help us to grasp something about God and His glory, His awesomeness.

#### Attendants – Seraphim

Just as Solomon had human glory and many attendants, he we are given some view of those that attend the Lord – they are called the SERAPHIM (which is the plural form) of SERAPH – and it means something like "fiery or flaming ones" – and this is the only place we find them mentioned in Scripture. Some have likened them to the LIVING CREATURES around the throne in Revelation 4 (which also have 6 wings) – but the truth is we don't know.

\*NOT\* quaint little cherubs!

A couple of things we do know is that:

- they are **\*NOT\*** like the typical artists impression of **rosy faced, infant-like** children which we normally might associate with CHERUBS and SERAPHS.
- Instead, what we do know, is that they are **very magnificent** and **powerful**.

When they speak their praises to each other, then **the doorposts and thresholds shake**.

I've heard people liken these flaming ones to being rather like FIGHTER JETS which make that SONIC BOOM when they break the sound barrier.

#### Holy, Holy, Holy

And it is very instructive what they are saying:

**Verse 3** "And they were calling to one another:

**'Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

Now we ourselves sing a lot of hymns that start in this way – for example: **\*\*\*\*\*SING\*\*\*\*\***

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

And I think the problem here is that:

- where we tend to "SING WITH A SWING"

- Isaiah, for want of a better way of putting this, “DROPPED LIKE A ROCK”

### Emphasis

In many languages, to add weight to a word you repeat it.

So for example the sayings in John’s gospel where Jesus starts with the words “Truly, truly, I say to you ...” always preface something which is of particular significance.

And here we have **the ONLY incidence of an adjective that is, if you like, raised to the power of three** – it is the only word “**CUBED**” in Scripture.

And so we are probably best to understand this not merely a 1 HOLY + a 2<sup>nd</sup> HOLY + a 3<sup>rd</sup> HOLY – but rather HOLY x HOLY x HOLY – that is HOLY to the exponential power of three.

### Trinity reference

Some people feel that added to that we have a possible reference to the persons of the Trinity here – that this holiness is being attributed to God the Father, God the Son and to God the Spirit as the Triune Godhead.

Well, we cannot say that it is not – but whatever else we say - this is a very significant statement.

### Glory – horizons expanded

It goes on “... the whole earth is full of his glory.”

Now notice that it does **\*not\*** say – “the whole earth **will one day** be filled with His glory”.

Isaiah is at this moment having:

- his horizons massively altered
- his perspectives updated
- his mind literally exploded

If Isaiah could have commented at this point – he would have probably been muttering to himself something along the lines of **“It just blows the mind!!”**.

And this is what the glory, the sheer unbridled majesty of God does.

As I’ve mentioned at other times, **this word glory is one that carried the sense of WEIGHT** and so there is a sense in which **when we behold the glory of God** – we are, in some very small way, **seeing God throw his weight around**.

### Holiness – 3 things to be said

Now we’ve been talking about holiness and using this word HOLY and maybe when I say this word you think of things like:

purity, righteousness, something sacred or set apart – maybe something beautiful.

Q. But what does it really mean?

The root Hebrew word *qadosh* (qadosh –kaw dosh) carries the idea of something that is “**separated**”, something “**devoted**”, **set apart, different – other** :

Let me give you three things that God’s HOLINESS tells us:

- #1 is that - **God is APART FROM US:**  
and this is pretty easy to see – because:

he is **DIVINE** and we are just **HUMAN**

he is has life in Himself (he is **INDEPENDENT**) and we are totally **DEPENDANT** for every breath

he is **INFINITE** (he has no limitations) we are **FINITE** (we do well if we make it to 80 years)

and even in the things we have in common – so for example our capacity to LOVE

his love is **UNBOUNDED** – it is a “Holy Love” and our is heavily **CIRCUMSCRIBED** and never free of selfish motivations.

We could go on

- #2 is that – God is not just APART FROM US - **God is ABOVE US:**

he is the TRANSCENDENT One – as Verse 1 says “I saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and exalted...”

This transcendence was see with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when His clothes became white like lightening.

It comes out in that description in 1 Timothy 6 verse 16 “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and **who lives in unapproachable light**”

Just as the hymn has it:

Immortal, invisible, God only wise, In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

The reality of His TRANSCENDENCE is picked up in Hebrews where we read:

(Hebrews 12v28-29) “...let us be thankful, and so worship God **acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”** “

How very wrong we are to equate God as some sort of an **equal, a mate, a buddy, a chum!!**

ABOVE – APART

- #3 is that - **God is AGAINST US:**

How this comes out so very clearly in this passage by Isaiah opening response Verse 5 literally “And I said – Woe to me 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.”

Let us not think that this is just some sort of OT experience that has been done away with thanks to the onset of the NT.

Remember what John the aged apostle saw on the Island of Patmos on Sunday morning (Revelation chapter 1 verses 12-17)

“I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone “like a son of man,” dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. **When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.**

God is so terrifyingly Holy that it makes Him terrifying to all and any sinners. God cannot look upon sin.

We talk a lot these days (or at least marketers do) about DEFINITION – every modern TV now supports HD – HIGH DEFINITION.

**And the presence of God brings our SIN into not merely HD but GD – “God Definition” and it is designed not for flat screens BUT flat faces – flat on the ground!!!**

### Atonement

The wonderful thing is that God sends one of his mighty seraphs to take a hot coal and touch Isaiah’s lips. The coal is taken from one of the altars in the temple, either the bronze altar where the offerings were sacrificed or from the incense altar just outside the Holy of Holies and either way the idea of SACRIFICE is present and through the ultimate sacrifice – through the atoning work of the Messiah to come – there is ATONEMENT available.

Isaiah’s sin – though it is still sin and still vile in every degree there is a full-blown remedy for it through the blood of Jesus.

Q. Has the blood of Jesus been applied to you?

If not, then you cannot go any further than this point. All bets are off. Stage 1 is that you must be changed – and that through the atoning work, the atoning blood that was shed at the Cross of Calvary.

Well that’s part 1 – the overture where Isaiah gets fundamentally C-H-A-N-G-E-D – CHANGED!!

## 2] Commissioned (Verse 8)

Let's now turn to see the second thing that Isaiah said:

It's the second half of Verse 8 "And I said, 'Here am I. Send me.'"

Up until this verse God has not said anything – but now the DIVINE REQUEST goes out:

(Verse 8) "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'"

And Isaiah pipes up and says "Me Lord, Me":

- It is wonderful to see the immediacy of his willingness, his real eagerness to serve.

Q. Have you got that? Q. That real keenness to be of service and in service for Jesus?

Q. If an opportunity turned up to serve the purposes of God – would you do an Isaiah – yes me Lord, O please let it be me!?

Bear in mind that Isaiah didn't even know what it was that he was signing up for – to just have an opportunity to respond to the wonderful grace of God that he has just experienced is REWARD ENOUGH!!!

- I guess we should ask Q. Why does it happen? Q. Is Isaiah just getting a bit over enthusiastic?

Well if you remember the words of the Seraph in Verse 7 – this helps us – "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for."

Isaiah knows that he is well fitted for service because he has experienced a CHANGE and that is a great basic piece of equipment.

Anyone who has been, at some level, face-to-face with God – has a story – a testimony – and we take that to people who do not have that same story.

Could start my car on Thursday

I had a problem with my car just a couple of days ago – and I could not get it to start whatever I tried – so as last resort I had to talk to my friendly man at the garage.

Now this man has a lot of knowledge and personal experience – and very quickly he was able to tell me exactly what was going on. He didn't have to be there, he didn't have to hear the car just turning over and over.

And actually it is very satisfying when someone has a problem and you have been through it and GOT TO THE OTHER SIDE.

The Apostle Paul – who was converted through a face-to-face meeting with Jesus on the



Damascus Road – (a bit of a NT version of Isaiah 6) – keeps on using his conversion story throughout the book of Acts.

If you are a CHANGED MAN or a CHANGED WOMAN then you are perfectly qualified to go to UNCHANGED PEOPLE and lead them on the road whereby they might be CHANGED.

Put that another way – before Isaiah would be able to say to anyone else “**Woe is you!**” – he had to have first cried himself “**Woe is me!**”

So it is here that Isaiah gets his task Verse 9 & 10

\*\*\*\*\***READ verses 9 & 10**\*\*\*\*\*

Q. Would you like this task?

I wonder whether you would like this message - it is a very hard-hitting one.

Hard passage to understand – x6 in NT

I used to really struggle whenever I would come to this text and this is not the only place you will meet it – it also gets quoted **no less than 6 times in the NT** – so that would make it one of the most quoted sections in the whole of Isaiah – so you know it is very significant.

The question is then – Q. What exactly does it mean?

Q. Is it really saying that God simply goes around the place just HARDENING, BLINDING and DEAFENING people so that they have no possibility of being saved? Because that is rather how this reads.

Well, as ever, parallel passages shed extra light and tend to make things a lot clearer – let me survey how the NT uses it and then I think the meaning will be a lot more obvious:

- **3 OF THE QUOTATIONS** - the ones in **Matthew, Mark** and **Luke** all come following **the parable of the sower** where we see different people’s hearts where there is an inadequate reception of the word
- **THE 4TH INSTANCE** - is in John 12 Verse 40 and get prefaced by the words a couple of verses earlier on: “Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:...”
- **THE 5TH INSTANCE** - is essentially the concluding paragraph of the book of Acts and gets prefaced with these words of Paul:  
“From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet:...”
- **THE LAST INSTANCE** – is in Romans 11 and again speaks about hardening due to unbelief.

There is a very important principle that we need to take on board here and that is that the Word of God is truly a **DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD** – and what I mean by that is that it cuts not just one way but two.

It is a sword of blessing for those that listen to the word and are obedient to it – to use the language of the good soil in the parable of the sower – they:

HEAR IT, UNDERSTAND IT, ACCEPT IT, RETAIN IT and by PERSERVERING produce a crop.

BUT – it also cuts the other way because every time you hear it and do nothing, you get a little bit harder, a little bit blinder, a little bit deafer.

EVENTUALLY – you will find that Isaiah 6 verses 9 & 10 will be your EPITAPH!!

Well so far so good, Isaiah – CHANGED and now COMMISSIONED – one more stage to go:

### 3] Committed (Verse 11)

His third response – “For how long, O Lord?”

And we should be clear he is not saying – Q. So how long Lord do I have to do this task?

Will it be 6 months (I could probably manage that) or perhaps even couple of years if I really hold my breath and put my mind to it!!

No! What he is saying is:

- Q. How long is this state of affairs going to prevail?
- Q. For how long is the prognosis going to be dire and dismal?

And do you know what the Lord tells him there in Verse 12 “until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken.”

Q. So when was that? Well when the people of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) had been exiled by the Assyrians in 722 BC, so that was approximately 18 years time AND when the people of the Southern Kingdom had been exiled in 586 BC – approximately in 150 years time.

So basically Isaiah would be long dead before this task he was being commissioned to carry out was done.

Q. So how is Isaiah realistically going to cope?

Well two things really:

- the FIRST - is that **THOSE GOD COMMISSIONS NEED TO BE COMMITTED AS WELL**  
put that another way – **those who are WILLING TO BE SENT**  
**must also be WILLING TO BE SPENT**
- the SECOND thing, at a very practical level, is that to be able to GO THE DISTANCE you **need to have a LONG RANGE PERSPECTIVE** and we get that in:

Verse 13 “But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

Isaiah knows that all is not lost, there will always be a REMNANT.  
To put that in NT terms – though many are INVITED few are CHOSEN

Yet there are ALWAYS those that are CHOSEN

God WAS in the saving business  
God IS in the saving business  
God ALWAYS WILL BE in the saving business

AND THEREFORE WE CAN – STAY WITH THE PROGRAM

## Conclusion

We've seen an awesome vision of God and as well we have a very compact insight into Isaiah:

- he was a man with a big view of God
- a deep awareness of his own sin
- a profound experience of the grace of God
- & a complete willingness to spend and be spent in God's service whatever the cost

Q. So where do you find yourself this morning?

Q. Where are you along this scale of CHANGED – COMMISSIONED – COMMITTED?

No change yet

Perhaps you can honestly say that you have never come to any point of decisive change – there has never been a day when God has changed you, permanently marked your life in such a clear way that you can never really go back to being the person you were before.

Perhaps this is the case because you feel well I'm too bad OR I'm too long in the tooth now (if I was going to be changed, then it would have happened by now and I'm a bit to sceptical maybe even a bit too cynical about life and the reality of change).

Q. But what about people like Saul of Tarsus who became the great Apostle Paul?

- He was a seriously BAD man
- He thought he knew everything there was to know about God
- But one day came, when he was least expecting it – and CHANGE CAME – SO WHY SAY IT DOES NOT HAPPEN?

Q. But what about people like the THIEF ON THE CROSS?

- He was a seriously GUILTY man
- He thought that his life was truly CURSED

- But one day came, when he was least expecting it – and CHANGE CAME – Today you will be with me in paradise?

I have a word of Scripture for you:

(Hebrews 3 verse 7) “So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...”

No commissioning yet

Q. Are you one for whom a real encounter with Jesus as Saviour & Lord has taken place – you rejoice in the saving work upon the cross that has been applied to you – HOWEVER...

...you have are not connected up to his TRAIN as it were.

You are just like a carriage in the sidings – sidelined, isolated, NOT pressed into service.

We'll ask Jesus the field in which he want you to labour.

Ask him to set you to the work for which you were designed in eternity past to do.

Ask him to activate the giftings of the Holy Spirit that he has given to you to do the work that only you can do.

No commitment yet

May you are saved, you are doing some works of service, and yet your first question is:

Q. How long do I have to do this Lord?

Your life is still under your control:

- you measure out carefully which bits God can have – and yes you're flexible and you let Him have a bit more one week and by way of fairness you take it back the following week
- provided the service and calling of God does not infringe on your own key goals, career aspirations, family priorities then all is fine

You ask that question in a way different to the way Isaiah asked it.

My prayer for everyone is that there may be a day, that there may come a day that TRULY CHANGES YOUR LIFE.

When all of the following will be true of you:

- CHANGED thoroughly SAVED
- COMMISSIONED clearly SENT
- & COMMITTED fully SPENT

In Jesus name - AMEN