

THE CALL OF ISAIAH

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Lessons: Isaiah 6

For many years after the Children of Israel entered the Holy Land there was no ruler over them but the Lord alone. It is true there were priests and judges but these always asked the Lord what they should do, and they followed whatever He told them, so that the real ruler was the Lord Himself. But in the days of Samuel they, became dissatisfied with this government of the Lord. They wanted to have a king, as did other nations round about them. They wanted to rule themselves, to decide for themselves what to do, rather than merely follow what the Lord told them. Samuel was sorry they asked him for a king. He knew it was because they did not love the Lord as much as they had done in the past. He knew they were falling away from the worship of the Lord; that they did not place absolute trust in Him; that they felt they could do things more wisely themselves. And so he warned them against having a king. But when he asked the Lord whether they should be allowed to have a king or not, the Lord said to permit it, and He promised to be with them still, although He could no longer lead them in the same way.

And so Saul was anointed, and he was followed by David, and by Solomon in turn, and for a time all went well. So long as the kings loved the Lord, and were willing to follow His Commandments, this form of government was satisfactory. But when the king himself became idolatrous, refused to inquire of the Lord, insisted upon acting against the Lord's will, and led the people away from the worship of the Lord, then was it necessary that the Lord should have some other way to rule His people.

And for this reason He raised up Prophets—men specially prepared to receive the Word of the Lord, and to proclaim it before the king, and the people. These Prophets, spoken of in the Old Testament, were great men. They were men who deeply loved their country, and who were willing to suffer many hardships and dangers, and even death, to bring the warnings and the promises of the Lord to their attention, and to urge them to turn aside from their evil ways and follow the Lord.

We are going to learn something about some of the Prophets you may not be taught about in school. These Prophets wrote books, which form part of the Old Testament. They are wonderful books, but they have many things in them which children cannot understand. I am going to tell you some of the things in them that you can understand, and try to give you an idea of the lives of these Prophets, and the great things they did for Israel, in its last days. I am going to

speaking especially about those four who are called the Major Prophets. Their names are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. And we begin today with the story of how Isaiah was called to be a prophet.

Isaiah lived about seven hundred and fifty years before the Lord was born, when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. It was a time of great danger, when the nations round about the Holy Land were becoming very powerful, and were fighting against one another, each seeking to become the ruler of the world. Especially the kingdom of Assyria, with its Capital at Nineveh, was spreading its conquests nearer and nearer to the Land of Israel, and threatening to destroy the Lord's people. And it was a time when the kings of Israel had become very wicked, had set up Idols to be worshiped, and had refused to hearken to the word of the Lord.

Isaiah loved the Lord from the time he was a little child. He loved the Lord, and he loved his country. He longed to do something to help his people, and to protect them from the dangers that threatened on every side. His father and mother were not poor. It is probable that they belonged to the Royal Family, and held a position of honor in the court. They also loved the Lord, and they sent their son, Isaiah, to school, at one of the Schools of the Prophets, where he studied the Lord's Word and was prepared for his work from a very early age. He cared nothing for wealth or power. He cast both aside, and went to live the simple life of those who set themselves apart for the service of the Lord, dwelling in the wilderness, clothing himself in coarse garments, and often putting on sackcloth as a sign of his sorrow for all the sins of his people.

And then one day the Lord called him to be a Prophet, destined to carry the warnings of impending war, and hardship, and defeat, to all the nation. It was in the year that King Uzziah died. Isaiah's spiritual eyes were opened, that he might see into the other world, and there he beheld a wonderful vision of the Lord, whom he saw sitting upon a throne, very high, with two beautiful angels guarding it on either side. These angels had six wings. With two they covered their face, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they did fly. And they called to one another saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."

The voices of the angels were very terrible—strong and powerful like the beating of great waves upon the seashore. Isaiah was frightened when he heard them. He thought how small, and how unworthy he was to stand in the presence of the Lord, and he cried, "Woe is me. For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Then one of the angels flew to the altar on which sacred fire was burning, and with a pair of tongs, he took from off the altar a glowing coal, and coming to Isaiah, he touched his mouth with the fire.

Now this was not the fire of this world. It was the fire of heaven, which is love to the Lord, and as soon as that fire touched his lips, Isaiah was filled with a great longing to serve the Lord, to do His will. He forgot himself; he forgot his weakness; he thought only of the Lord, and how he might show his great love to Him.

Then he heard the voice of the Lord from the throne, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And Isaiah called out eagerly, "Hear am I, send me." And so the Lord sent him to teach and to lead His people.

Now I want you to think of this. What happened to Isaiah should happen also to you. You live in a time when the Lord's Church is just being established again in the world. You live in a time when that Church is surrounded by dangers, and when there must be continual warfare to protect the Church from those who would destroy it. Every one of you is born to perform some use, some work for that Church. It is to prepare you for such a work, that you go to school and learn the teachings of the Lord's Word, even as Isaiah did, so long ago. You too must grow up to love the Lord with all your heart, and to love your Church, as the Kingdom of the Lord with men. It should be your highest wish, to help protect that Church, to help build it, to be of some real service to the Lord in the establishment of it. If you make this love greater than all others in your heart, then when you grow up, you too will receive a call. The Lord, will provide a work for you to do. He will touch your lips with the fire of heaven, and send you forth as faithful soldiers to offer your life in battle against all that is evil—against all those forces that would destroy the New Church. This is a wonderful time in which you live. There is opportunity for deeds of heroism, for deeds of sacrifice, for a work of great service to mankind, if only you remain true to the Lord's Word, and hearken to His voice when He calls to you out of heaven, and answer Him as did Isaiah, saying "Here am I, send me."