

Articles and Sermons :: Sent from God - Art Katz

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This morning I feel impressed to share with you a new word that has come out of the recent ministry days in Mexico, and which I believe is going to be a significant arrow in the Lord's quiver. I am not even sure of its full meaning, but can only say that it resonates and hints at significant things in our understanding of God. As with every word from heaven, you can get from it what you will, or you can just as equally get nothing at all. Or later on, all of a sudden, the word will spring to life in the sovereign purposes of God.

The text is from Isaiah 6.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple.

Above Him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts."

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven."

And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Then I said, "Here am I; send me."

And He said, "Go, and tell this people, 'Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.' Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed."

Then said I, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah has removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof" (Isaiah 6:1-13)

I was quite surprised when the Lord quickened this and underlined ways of perceiving the text not previously considered. But I think it is going to be one of those seminal messages that come forth every now and then, the *rhema* word of God that may not immediately be understandable to all to whom it comes. If it doesn't fit right now, do not set it aside, but I do believe that what was suddenly and dramatically exposed in this sixth chapter was pivotal for all of Isaiah's future prophetic use as well as the issue of Israel's destiny.

Are you guilty with me of having too airily dismissed this account as some kind of mystic vision of the Lord? Somewhere high and lifted up with His train filling the temple in some kind of hyper-state of glory? Why would it affect the prophet so as to cause him to pronounce his being undone? My own suggestion is that the prophet saw the King in the greatest moment of His majesty. In other words, God in His deepest essence was brought to a point of such expression that anyone who contemplates that moment rightly has got to be altogether devastated and undone. With that in mind, I am led to believe Isaiah saw the crucifixion of the King, because nothing reveals the majesty of God more than in the depth of His su

ffering, experienced and borne for us as atonement!

You may ask how Isaiah could have seen the crucifixion of Jesus six or seven centuries before the actual event. Let us not forget that the Lord was 'slain from before the foundations of the earth were laid.' If we only see the crucifixion of Jesus as a historical event in a point of time, we will be marred and limited in our Christian walk. Our walk will of necessity be with a minimal comprehension of the crucifixion as a body of doctrine to which we must agree, but we have not seen the glory. And unless we see the **glory**, there never will be any sending.

This is not just a chance episode in the life of the prophet; it is the unfolding of a remarkable pattern; a sequence of events by which the prophet, who already had a ministry and was already cautioning and warning the nation of its sin from the very first chapter of his book, now enters a new dimension. His subsequent ministry as **one sent** was no longer merely to warn or to caution, but to **judge**. His word would now constitute judgment. They will not hear, they will not see, their hearts will be dulled because the prophet has spoken to them in a new depth of urgency and weight and authority **as one sent**.

How many of us have sufficiently dwelt on the word **sent** as we ought? Do we understand the significance of the difference between one who **went** and the one who is **sent**? However well-meaning it might be, is not most of our Christian activity self-initiated or committee determined? Do we know, and I mean **really** know, what it is to be sent from the One who is enthroned?

My own observation is that the overwhelming majority of Christians have a self-motivated itch to go and to do, to be seen and to cut a swathe for themselves and their ministry, but we are not seeing sendings of the kind that initiated the early history of the Church. Those that were **sent** turned the world upside-down. Do we sufficiently honor and esteem the phenomenon of sending? Do we understand the difference between the consequences of the work that results from one sent in comparison to the work of one who is self-initiated in his going? Are we even assured that the world needs to be turned upside-down? Or do we see the world as needing merely to be modified and have some of its excesses reduced? Do we see the world as being evil? Are we chafed by its immorality, even its a-morality? Do we have the basis for comparison that would be ours once having seen the Lord high and lifted up?

Everything hinges upon seeing the Lord **as the Lord**, because after forty-one years in the faith and in world-wide ministry, touching and examining the Church in its best forms, I would have to say that my greatest grief over the condition of the Church, its leadership and its prominent ministers is that they do not know God **as God**. They do not know Him as He in fact is. Without this knowledge of God, we are condemned to a hollow counterfeit much more in harmony with our own approving ambition and intentions. Consequently, there is no fear of God, and we will find ourselves taking liberties and initiating conduct that was not sent from Heaven. Everything rests on seeing the Lord high and lifted up and enthroned in His majestic glory and brought to perfection in the moment of His most excruciating suffering at Calvary. That is what this prophet saw, and he cried out "I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips!"

The problem is not the unclean lips; but "I am a **man**." We do not know how deeply humanistic man is **as man**. We do not see how deeply the intrinsic nature of man is opposed to God. We do not see how our ambitions and self-initiated activity could possibly be an act of direct rebellion against God. We do not see our unwillingness to **wait** to be sent as being any particular offense. Isaiah saw **himself**. "Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man." And if I am a man, of necessity my lips are going to be defiled, even though a prophet.

Until we agree and come to this low estimation of ourselves, we will always suffer the loss of the high exaltation of God. The two things are inextricably joined. Who of us thinks they can perceive the truth of themselves as man? Is not our estimation of ourselves far out of proportion to the way in which we really need to see ourselves? Is not the reason we are able to indulge such exaltation because we have no basis for comparison? Do we not see ourselves only in comparison to others? By so doing, are we not rather imagining our own superiority? When you see yourself in comparison to God, however, you become **as a dead man**.

This is the way of sanity; this is truth; this is reality; it is the foundation of any true sending. Why would God send half-baked believers anywhere into the world? What are they going to communicate? They cannot communicate anything that exceeds where they themselves are **in their own estimation**. Yes, they might bring some measure of good, but they are not going to turn anybody's world upside-down. Only one who is sent from the Throne bears the authority and anointing of that One who sends.

"Who will go for us?" The word "who" haunts me; it suggests very few candidates. How often do you find a believe

r who has risen above the prevailing culture and the correctness of his doctrine, and who really knows God **as God**, who sees God as terrifying, stupefying and vast? When was the last time you met someone who has seen God in His greatest act, namely, the revelation of the nature of God in His suffering and death, which had ever and always been His nature? The only thing that the Cross did was reveal what God always was and is. God is a servant. He is a sent one Himself from the Father.

What did it mean for this sent Son, who had lived eternally in the presence of the Father, to forsake that exalted and unimaginable condition of relationship, and to come down to this crusty globe and take upon himself the form of a man? He began life as a helpless infant laid in a manger and suffered everything that was required of an earthly, human existence as a Jew and as a son of David, a son of Abraham and as a son of Adam, so to speak. We do not know the humility of God until we have rightly pondered what it meant for the Son to come down into this Earth. It was the crucifixion **before the crucifixion**. Every instance of it, every act of it is the issue of self-denial; it is the issue of compassion and concern for other at the expense of oneself. We need to probe and examine this more than any other consideration, more than our yearnings to become sophisticated in understanding the Last Days movement of the Jews and the Church's mandate during that time.

“Who shall go for us?” We are back to that piercing question. The only one who can go is the one who has **seen**, and having seen, comes to such a place of repulsion over himself that he is undone. This was Isaiah, the prince of the prophets speaking. If **he** could say, “I am undone” at the seeing of God as He really is in His glory, what shall **we** say? And until we say it with the same heart-piercing cry, we will never be a candidate for being sent. But, what does this whole cosmic drama wait on? The text itself tells us: “In the year that king Uzziah died.” What would the Lord be trying to say here? Did the Holy Spirit give that just as an historic index so we could date this event because we know the lifespan of this king? Or does the death of the king have something to do with the revelation given to the prophet? What would you suspect?

My own intuition is that the death of the king is **the decisive factor** that set in motion the **entire** episode. But, why is this so important? Why does a death have to necessarily precede a revelation of this magnitude? This is a revelation that issues in a call, and the call issues in a judgment upon Israel by a prophet going forth as a sent one. And not only that, but it is a judgment upon Israel that is still valid to this day. Israel is still bound; its eyes are closed nationally-speaking; its heart is numb; it cannot see, cannot hear and cannot understand. Jews are civil and gracious on any other subject, but on this they become impenetrable because the judgment has been decreed.

Apart from a few ‘remnant’ Jews like myself, the nation itself presently stands under this judgment. You wonder why so many Christians eagerly believe God has called them to be prophets. That eagerness betrays their own **over-estimation** of themselves. What if your speaking would mean a necessary judgment for the hearers? Some measure of judgment goes forth in the prophetic proclamation that is designed to bring to death areas of the flesh that are impudent, untrained and undisciplined and need this judgment. It is not a pleasant task. Only those who are dead and see themselves as undone are the ones who are capable of going and pronouncing that kind of judgment. It is all the same to them whether the hearers are blessed or judged. The issue is obedience to a ‘Go, and say to them’...

We are moving towards a concluding episode in the salvational history of mankind with regards to the people Israel. Israel is under judgment through a prophetic word, but the judgment needs to be reversed and the people be released **by another sending**. If it took a sending to bring the judgment, in my opinion, it will take a sending to end the judgment. There needs to be a ‘prophetic’ company of believers as the Church of the Last Days, who have seen the Lord and know Him in His majesty, high and lifted up, and who are stricken to death at their own vain presumptions about themselves. They are those who see themselves ‘as good as dead,’ and unless a coal comes off the altar of God, they will not presume that they can speak for God.

From the text we know that God does not in any way placate the prophet; He is silent, but sends an angel with a coal from the altar, clearly implying that He is in complete agreement with the prophet's own estimation of himself. The important point to note is the reaction of the prophet to the revelation of God in His resplendent majesty **as crucified** evoking such a sense of his own shame. Karl Barth, my favorite theologian, the great German-Swiss thinker clearly understood this reality when he wrote: “The reality of sin cannot be known or described except in relation to the one who has vanquished it.”

How many of us can say that we know the reality of sin? And I am absolutely assured that if we do not know the reality of sin as God sees it and as Isaiah saw it, **we have no reality**. The reality of sin is the necessary foundation of all human reality, and if we do not have it, all of our grandiose categories about redemption and the Cross are only just a vapor; t

They are 'sound and fury signifying nothing.' More than we know, we have unsuspectingly reduced our beliefs to a body of doctrine. Our agreement with certain evident truths will never effect anything in us or in the world. And why would God send anyone in that condition? Has He nothing better to do, no better candidate to send than someone with a shallow notion of sin? Why would He send anyone who has fallen short of the acknowledgement of His glory, and who has little knowledge of what atonement means or what He has paid to obtain it? Paul could say, "Paul knew the terror of the Lord with regard to sin, and therefore could persuade men." This kind of knowing needs to be an object of our highest priority. How do we come to know the reality or the terror of sin, realizing that that is the underlay of everything? What did Jesus do and perform that was so consequential, worthy of our admiration, let alone our adoration if we do not understand what He met in His death?

Have we noticed how the world is dying, without foundations and oblivious to eternity? Has the world been told what sin is or what judgment and hell are? Has it not rather dispensed with Jesus as a peripheral nothing, celebrated at Christmas time to give the department stores the occasion for our orgies of buying? Even Japan has a Christmas. The world has turned the Advent of the birth of the Son, who met the sin problem in His death, into a culture for commerce. How is it that we are not chafed over that? How is it that we can so easily join the world right into those stores and indulge ourselves as much as any rather than boycott the event itself? Have we been able to persuade Jewish life of the terror of sin? Or do they look upon our celebration of Christmas as just a harmless, Gentile equivalent of their Chanukah? Is not their Chanukah as much a false piece of baloney as our Christmas? And the world continues to spiral down into death while these things are celebrated as being somehow real.

There needs to be a great cry going out from Christendom that we have not seen or perceived rightly the great, central event of history, the Advent of the Son from Heaven who took upon Himself the form of a man, Jewish man, and suffered the consequence for the sin of mankind in order to appease the honor of His Father, who had been disgraced by a sinful, covenant-breaking humanity. Until that revelation has broken upon our hearts and until we have seen sin in the context of the suffering, the humility and the anguish of His soul, we have not the knowledge of sin and therefore **everything** will suffer in proportion.

Do we really know how vile evil is? How intrinsic it is to man and to his nature? I don't mean man's most malicious things, but when he is acting at his best. To have an **inadequate** sense of sin is to have an **inadequate** sense of God. If we have a low estimation of sin how then can we exalt God? Is this not the thing that keeps us from adoration of God in its truest and deepest sense? When we do come to true adoration, we will have come to the ultimate place of relationship with God that is transcendent and breaks through in realms of worship and praise that cannot be imitated or effected in lesser places. I believe this is the place of reality that releases the authority and power of God on the basis that we can now be trusted by the Living God.

We need to have an esteem for the word 'sent' which comes through in the Greek word apostolos, meaning a 'sent one.' Will we be willing to wait, knowing that we are presently unqualified and that we have nothing really to communicate that would turn the world upside-down? Will we be willing to wait for God to impart to us an authority to face nations or peoples who are intrinsically hostile or indifferent to our message? The only way that anyone will begin to rightly hear us is dependent upon their recognition that indeed we are **sent** ones in the authority of God, bearing a **sent** word.

From the text we have seen that Israel's present condition as a nation has been condemned to judgment, because a prophet came who was sent and spoke and performed it. Nothing has changed from that day to the present one. The 'until' has not yet come, and when it comes it will come in apocalyptic devastation and ruin **in present-day Israel**. My intuition is that the judgment that came by prophetic speaking needs to be relieved by prophetic speaking. Where are the Isaiahs of our generation? Where can we conceive of a corporate sending, a 'corporate Isaiah' who could be sent, whose speaking now will open eyes rather than close them, open hearts rather than close them, save rather than condemn?

I believe it is waiting for those who are sent, waiting for those who have seen the truth of their condition and have cried out over it, because they have seen the Lord as He is, high and lifted up. But what precipitates everything? **The year that Uzziah dies!** When we can say 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts' and that 'the whole earth is full of His glory,' not just in triumphal moments, but in the moments of death and disappointment and what seem to be the severest contradictions of God, **then we have arrived!** We have come to the true knowledge; we have seen the Lord and we have seen ourselves as He sees us. Only then will He purge and send us.

Prayer:

I want to pray now, that if you do not know who your Uzziah is for you, that the Lord will show it. There are various forms of Uzziah: it could be a person, a ministry, some personal ambition. "My God, we have quoted that text; we have used it as sermons. We thought we knew it and understood it, but we ourselves were not affected and did not understand the supremacy of one sent from the throne of Heaven. We are so alive to our own itch ourselves that we have not wanted to wait for that. We have taken every door of opportunity to minister in response to the needs everywhere in the Earth that would welcome high-spirited and bright young believers to bring blessing. But the Earth yet remains in its curse and still needs to be turned on its head.

Lord, search us out and reveal to us who that Uzziah is. Is he likely not someone who is presumptuous in the realm of ministry and tries to usurp the function of priests because he is a king or leader, and we admired that one and wanted to be identified with that one? We therefore share something of his presumption, which is why he has to die for us and we have to die for him if we are to see the Lord as he in fact is, namely, high and lifted up.

*Come and bring us into that agreement with the seraphim that qualifies us to be **sent ones**; those who do not bring a merely cultural, time-dated perspective but a timeless view of the angels of God who forever perceive the glory of God. Bring us to this apostolic and prophetic place, for Israel's sake, needing to be freed from the judgment that has been imposed upon it by the speaking of a prophet, by a fresh and new speaking of a prophetic company who can be sent, whose speaking will open the blind eyes, open the deaf ears, open the closed hearts that they might be saved! What a destiny of the Church at the conclusion of the age! Thank you for the preciousness of the call, in Jesus' name. Amen."*

Scripture verses from the Authorized Standard Version of the Bible

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