QUESTION:

Servant of God, praise the Lord! I seek clarification on Isaiah 6:1–10. In verse 8, who says “Send me”? Was it Isaiah? Also, why was he purified with a burning coal?

BIBLICAL TEXT: Isaiah 6:1–10 (NIV)

Let’s begin by reading a portion of the passage:

> *Isaiah 6:5–8 (NIV):*
> “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.”
> Then one of the seraphim 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.”
> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

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1. Who Said “Send Me”?

The answer is clear from the passage: the prophet Isaiah is the one who said, *“Here am I. Send me!”* (Isaiah 6:8). This was Isaiah’s personal response to God’s call after his cleansing and encounter with divine holiness.

It’s important theologically to understand that this was not Jesus speaking, as some may mistakenly assume. While Christ is present throughout Scripture (see John 1:1; Luke 24:27), this particular response in Isaiah 6 is Isaiah’s own personal surrender to God’s call into prophetic ministry.

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2. Why Was Isaiah Purified with a Burning Coal?

Theological Insight:

Isaiah’s confession—“I am a man of unclean lips”—shows his recognition of sin, not just in his actions but in his very nature and speech. This represents the holiness of God confronting the sinfulness of humanity.

In Scripture, the mouth often represents the heart (Luke 6:45), so Isaiah’s confession implies total unworthiness in character and conduct. His encounter with God’s holiness immediately made him aware of his need for cleansing. He couldn’t serve or speak on behalf of a holy God without first being purified.

The Role of the Coal:

The live coal, taken from the altar, symbolizes both atonement and purification. In Old Testament theology, the altar was the place of sacrifice—where sin was dealt with through blood (see Leviticus 16). The coal touching his lips symbolically transferred God’s atoning grace to Isaiah, signifying:

- Removal of guilt: *“your guilt is taken away”*
- Atonement of sin: *“your sin atoned for”* (Isaiah 6:7, NIV)

This parallels New Testament purification through Christ’s sacrifice:

> “But if we walk in the light… the blood of Jesus… purifies us from all sin.” *(1 John 1:7 NIV)*

Thus, Isaiah’s cleansing by fire points to the transforming and painful grace that prepares us to serve God.

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3. What Can We Learn Today?

This passage reminds us that:

- God uses cleansed vessels. Before Isaiah could speak for God, he needed internal purification.
- Spiritual readiness requires repentance. Isaiah didn’t excuse his sin; he confessed it.
- God’s call follows cleansing. Isaiah wasn’t drafted—he volunteered, but only *after* being made clean.

We, too, must allow God to purify our hearts and words. As James 3:10 warns, *“Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”* True service begins with personal transformation.

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4. The Cost of the Call

God’s call to Isaiah wasn’t easy. In verses 9–10, God tells him to preach to people who wouldn’t listen:

> “Be ever hearing, but never understanding… Make the heart of this people calloused” *(Isaiah 6:9–10)*

This shows that divine calling doesn’t guarantee worldly success, but it does require obedience.

Jesus Himself quoted this passage (Matthew 13:14–15) to describe the hardness of people’s hearts—a reminder that those who speak truth must do so boldly, even when rejected.

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5. Final Encouragement: Accept the Fire

Sometimes God’s refining comes through “fire”—not literal coals, but correction, trials, rebukes, or uncomfortable truths. As Revelation 3:19 (NIV) says:

> “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.”

If we want our lips and hearts to be holy, we must allow God’s fire—His truth, correction, and Spirit—to purify us. Only then can we truly say, with Isaiah:
“Here am I. Send me.”

May the Lord bless you as you seek to know Him, be purified by Him, and serve Him with a clean heart.

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