

## **ISAIAH 6: 1-13 AS A PARADIGM FOR PROPHETIC ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

This paper studied the text of Isaiah 6:1-13 in view of a better understanding of the call of the Prophet Isaiah and the dynamics involved in Isaiah's call. Furthermore, the implications of the text on the exercise of prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria were evaluated. The historico-critical method and synchronic approaches of biblical exegesis were deployed. This paper discovered that Isa 6:1-13 represented the call of Isaiah into prophetic ministry and that Isaiah who hitherto was unclean or unworthy before the encounter with YHWH and other members of the divine assembly, were cleansed and subsequently, called into prophetic function with specific mission. The paper discovered that prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria is fraught with issues, with some persons who are not called by God arbitrarily declare themselves as such and enter into prophetic ministry. Therefore, this paper argued that if Isa 6:1-13 is properly understood and appropriated, the practice of prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria will be greatly enhanced and devoid of the negative issues associated with it. The paper concluded that prophetic ministry is the sole prerogative of God. The paper recommended that Christian denominations can adopt the call of Isaiah in Isa 6:1-13 as a model for discerning and supervising prophetic activities in contemporary Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Prophetic, ministry, Contemporary, Isaiah, Call, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Prophetic ministry is one very ancient ministry that runs through the Old Testament and in fact, played a major role in the spiritual, social, political and cultural life of the people of Israel. Thus, the story of ancient Israel is not told without mentioning the different activities of different prophets who functioned at different times in their history, communicating divine will and purpose to them, leading them to YHWH and more than anything else, being the sign of YHWH's presence among his people. The prophet therefore, was not only called by YHWH but was also an assurance of YHWH's constant presence with his people, Israel, with the aim of fostering healthy relationship with their God.

Contemporary Nigeria is certainly a scene or stage that is filled with men and women who are involved in prophetic ministry. These individuals claim to have been called by God and have indeed been given specific

mandate including prophetic anointing to function as prophets or prophetesses. Interestingly, one wonders if the claims that they enjoy divine mandate is true as the activities of some contradict what one expects of someone who enjoys divine mandate to function as a prophet or prophetess. By and large, contemporary Nigeria is faced with what one can describe as the existence of false prophets who are schooled in scamming, deceiving and luring unsuspecting Nigerians into unwholesome activities.

### **Statement of the Problem of the Text of Isaiah 6:1-13**

The narrative in Isa 6:1-13, presents some theological complexities that provoke the following questions: What is the relationship between the text of Isa 6:1-13 and the earlier prophetic activities of Isaiah in chapters 1:1-5:30? How come Isaiah was already proclaiming divine messages and fulfilling prophetic roles before his actual commissioning as a prophet in Isa 6:1-13? Is there a problem of chronology in the placement of the text of Isa 6:1-13? Furthermore, what is the relationship between Isaiah's personal experience and the situation of Israel? What is the nature of the prophetic call and the dynamics involved in prophetic call and ministry? These and many more constitute significant issues therein in the text. In like manner, contemporary Nigeria is faced and flooded with men and women who engage in prophetic ministries and a closer examination of these, show that some are not called, some have no form of basic theological formation or training that prepare them for such ministries. Also, some are prophets for economic reasons since it is a veritable means of providing daily bread and meeting up with other necessities of life.

This paper therefore argues that the text of Isa 6:1-13 which is all about the call of the prophet Isaiah, provides a good platform to understanding prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria. It further argues that the text of Isa 6:1-13 has serious positive implications for the activities of prophetic ministers in contemporary Nigeria because of false prophetic claims. Finally, it argues that if the text of Isa 6:1-13 is properly understood and imbibed, persons who are involved in prophetic ministries in contemporary Nigeria will be adequate in the discharge of the prophetic ministries.

### **Perspectives on Isaiah 6: 1-13**

In discussing Isaiah in Isa 6:1-13, scholars disagree whether it is a call narrative or a divine throne room vision. Significantly, scholars argue that the narrative does not follow the call narrative formula of Moses in Exodus chapter 3 or the Jeremiah's call narrative in Jeremiah chapter 1. Furthermore, the structure and language of Isaiah 6:1-13, is argued to be a reminiscent of the throne room vision in 1 Kings 22 and in Ezekiel 1 and the placement of the text of Isaiah 6:1-13 is more explicable as a throne room vision than a call narrative preceded by five chapters of prophetic visions (Allen, 2023). Again, where then is the call narrative in the scroll, if the text of Isaiah 6:1-13 is taken

to be a throne room vision purely and not a call narrative? The argument can only be resolved by concluding that instead of choosing between both, the text of Isaiah 6:1-13 should be approached as a call narrative in the style of a throne room vision (Allen, 2023).

Advancing the point above, House (1993) insists that Isaiah 6:1-13 is a call narrative couched within a vision and manifests like Old Testament call narratives in the likes of the calls of Moses and Jeremiah. In driving home this argument, a parallel is established in the response of Isaiah who already accepted or volunteered to do God's work (Isa 6:8) with the responses of Moses who repeatedly made excuses why he should not lead Israel (cf. Exod. 3:11-4:17) and Jeremiah who gave reasons why he should not prophesy and would later have confrontations with YHWH (House, 1993). Therefore, House partitioned the text of Isa. 6:1-13 to justify his claim that it is a call narrative within the context of a vision as: (1) Isaiah's vision of God (6:1-4), (2) Isaiah's sin and its cleansing (6:5-7), (3) Isaiah's commission (6:8-10), and (4) Isaiah's difficult ministry and Israel's difficult future (6:11-13).

In concluding this discourse, Groenewald (2012) conceptualized Isaiah 6:1-13 as a call report or narrative that deals with the call of the prophet. He argues that the call of Isaiah in chapter 6, is one of the best-known passages in the book of Isaiah and is to be understood as a call report. Also, he identified the fact that the call took place within the vision the prophet had, a vision dated to the year of King Uzziah's death. For him, the chapter best describes the vision in which the prophet encounters the Lord who in His majesty, sits on His throne and is surrounded by Seraphs who proclaim His holiness. Therefore, Isa 6:1-13 is a call narrative that took place within the vision Isaiah had.

### **Historico-Literary Analysis of Isaiah 6:1-13**

In discussing the literary context of Isaiah 6:1-13 one must take into cognizance the debate concerning the placement of Isaiah's call (chapter 6) and the position it occupies in the book. Also, the strategic nature of chapter 6 in relation to the entire book comes to the fore and as such, it should be said that the general consensus as regards its placement in the entire book is that, it bridges the gap between chapters 1-5 on the one hand and chapters 7-12 on the other hand and consequently creates a unity in the entire book. Oswalt (1986) argues that:

The remaining parts of the text with the exception of 1:1-5:30, is a fleshing out of the themes of Isaiah 6:1-13. Significantly, chapters 7-39, express the majestic nature of God and at the same time, the sinfulness of the people of Israel (6:1-5). Chapter 40-55, tell of God's desire and ability to deliver his people (6:6-8) while chapters 55-66, deal with the realities of struggling to be God's light in a non-conducive environment.

From the above elucidation, the immediate contexts of Isaiah 6:1-13 are Isaiah 1:1-5-30 and Isaiah 7:1-12:6. As regards to the literary structure of Isa 6:1-13, a careful and detailed reading of Isa 6:1-13 would reveal that a clear demarcation exist in the text. That is, naturally, the narrative is divided into two major separate parts which are: Isa 6:1-7 and Isa. 6:8-13. This demarcation is guided by the report of what Isaiah saw, (I saw) in verse 1 of the text and the report of what Isaiah heard (then I heard) in verse 8 of the text in the vision. The entire Isa 6:1-13 can be further broken down into: Isa 6:1-4 (the setting of the call of Isaiah), Isa 6:5-8 (Isaiah receives his vocation and Isa 6: 9-13 (the nature of the prophetic ministry is revealed to Isaiah). In any case, for this paper, the text is structured as:

1. Isa 6:1-4 (The Setting of the Call)
2. Isa 6:5 (Isaiah Discovers his Uncleanliness)
3. Isa 6:6-7 (Isaiah's Purification)
4. Isa 6:8 (YHWH Calls and Send Isaiah)
5. Isa 6:9-12 (YHWH Declares the Mandate or Message to Isaiah)
6. Isa 6:13 (the Holy Remnant)

## **Content Analysis**

### **1. Isa 6:1-4 (The Setting of the Call of Isaiah)**

The opening words, "In the year that king *Uzziah* died", shows that the prophet Isaiah dated the event in the text at the death of king *Uzziah* at about 740BC and at about this time too, *Tiglath Pileser* of Assyria was threatening Judah (Leclerc, 2007). In other words, it functions as a chronological marker for Isaiah's vision. According to Hebrew tradition and religion, it is not possible to see God as anyone who does, dies (cf. Gen 32:30; Exod. 19:21; 20:19) (Oswalt, 1986). Also, there are instances where God allowed himself to be seen (cf. Deut. 18:16; Judg. 13:22; Gen. 16:9-13; Exod. 24:9-11, Judg 6: 11-24), within particular context though. In keeping with the traditional Hebrew belief that one cannot see God, scholars argue that the Masoretic emended the YHWH (יהוה) which was the original word used for Sovereign to a word for title Adonai.

It is important to note that the king *Uzziah* had lived under separation and isolation, under divine displeasure for years (cf. 2 Kings 15:5, 2Chr 26:16ff) on account of his sins and as death approached, he remained uncleanness in the eyes of humans (Motyer, 1993). Thus, the darkness of death that was upon king *Uzziah* was symbolical. That is, the prophet Isaiah saw in the king's death the nation, its plight and its problem (Motyer, 1993). It should be noted also that apart from the death of the king, *Uzziah*, Assyria had risen in might and was pushing closer and nearer to threatening the Israelite states. Thus, the nation was faced with chaos and hopelessness and of course, no earthly king can help resolve this crisis other than the Lord God of Host.

The encounter of Isaiah was indeed an awe-filled experience as he beheld the divine assembly. The action of the Seraphim, one of the members of the divine assembly with no doubt, brings out the grandeur of the occasion. Oswalt argues that this gesture introduces the cognitive and rational elements into the entire episode (1986). It is clear from the text that the song was repeated continuously, Holy (*qādôš*) and it certainly expresses the holiness of the Lord God and his presence in all his glory everywhere (Motyer, 1993). Since repetition in Hebrew expresses superlative or indicates totality, the triaging, the strongest form of the superlative in Hebrew, the threefold *qādôš* show that indeed, holiness is supremely the truth about God and this holiness is so far beyond human thought (Motyer, 1993). This expresses God's transcendental holiness which is the mode of God's immanence for the earth is full of his glory. Isa 6:1-4 depicts clearly Isaiah's experience before YHWH.

## **2. Isa 6:5 (Isaiah Discovers his Uncleanliness)**

The prophet Isaiah suddenly becomes conscious of himself. He surely pronounces woe to himself. He who had made similar pronouncements to other (cf. Isa 5:8; 11; 18; 20:21), now pronounces it to himself. The experiences in v4, compel him to decry his limitation and his Uncleanliness together with his people's sins. Since the primary element of God's holiness that distinguishes us from him is his character (Oswalt, 1986), Isaiah recognized his uncleanliness, he recognizes also, "that his character is not, any more than his peoples', in keeping with God's character" (Oswalt, 1986). The unclean lips thus, represent that of which they are an expression, that is, their hearts and their wills do not belong to God. Consequently, sin and iniquity (of Isaiah and his people), must be removed for them to serve God again. He is faced with certain judgment and he certainly, brings himself before the Lord God of Host (Oswalt, 1986). Interestingly, Isaiah reckons with the fact that no earthly king would be capable of saving Israel other than the Lord God of Host. The unclean Isaiah beholds the divine assembly and is faced with YHWH's utter holiness and consequently, Isaiah discovers his unworthiness.

## **3. Isa 6:6-7 (Isaiah's Purification)**

The humbling experience in verse 5, was so intense that Isaiah did not plead for mercy nor did he make any promise to repent should he be pardoned. In any case, Isaiah experiences grace as the Lord God of Host, reaches out to him. The Seraph touched the mouth of Isaiah and declared him cleansed from all guilt while at the same time, declared that all his sins were forgiven. Essentially, the glowing stone was instrumental in the cleansing of Isaiah, thus, granting him entrance into YHWH's presence and making him available to embrace the mission. The one who would proclaim the words or message of the Holy One must himself be holy and without sin. The mouth thus represents the instrument with which the words of YHWH will be proclaimed. Prophetic ministry is essentially linked to holiness.

#### **4. Isa 6:8 (YHWH Calls and Sends Isaiah)**

Certainly, Isaiah experiences the effect of the episode in verse 7. Reconciliation is the logical consequence of atonement and as soon as this happens, the prophet Isaiah enters into a new world of experience. He hears the voice of the Lord God of Host. One get the feeling here that, the preceding episodes, were in anticipation of this moment. There is a connection between Isaiah's lips and his mission to speak: in order for Isaiah to speak the word of the Holy God, his lips must be pure (Leclerc, 2007). Isaiah was prepared for this moment. He can now behold the Lord and can now worship him. Significantly, the prophet can now hear in order to respond.

The "us" in YHWH's statement "...and who will go for us", is a plural consultation which is agreed by scholars to refer to the heavenly host, members of the divine assembly (cf. 1Kings 22:19-23) (Oswalt, 1986). Also, it is important to stress that the statement of YHWH, "whom shall I send and who will go for us", was not directed to the prophet, yet, none of the other members of the divine assembly was expected to answer as the question was meant to be answered by a human being. As the text put it, the question asked by the Lord "whom shall I send", calls for volunteer and as such it shows that "the Lord not only gives his servants and messengers command and commission according to his own election, but also proposes the undertaking of a commission to the voluntary determination" (Lang et al 108). Interestingly, the only human present who could have answered the question was Isaiah and as such, the question of God was "therefore a form by which the Lord honors the *rûha nādîbāh* (free spirit) (Ps. 51:14), that He knew was present in the Prophet, in that He gave it opportunity to manifest itself" (Lang, Schaff, Nägelsbach, Eduard, Lowrie & Moore, 2008). Evidently, Isaiah was prepared and ready to commit himself to the service of the Lord God of Host. Lastly, it appears the prophet having experienced the mercy of the Lord God most high, willingly and freely accepted to be a messenger of the Lord God most high. Oswalt commenting on Isaiah 6:1-8 writes:

The sequential relationship of the element ought not to be overlooked. Each element leads to the next. The death of the king prepares the way for the vision of God, the vision of the Lord, leads to self-despair, self-despair opens the door to cleansing, makes it possible to recognize the possibility of service; the total experience leads to an offering of oneself (1986, p.186).

#### **5. Isa 6:9-12 (YHWH Declares the Mandate to Isaiah)**

##### **i. Isa 9-10**

These two verses introduce the reader to the message and the task that God gave to the prophet. The syntactical construction of the two imperatives

(“hear” (*šim’ū*) and “see” (*ūrə’ū*) plus the two infinitive absolutes (“hearing” (*šāmōwa*) and “seeing” (*rā’ō*)) are very important as they stress the continuation of an activity (Smith, 2007). Thus, verse 9, gives the impression that YHWH intended the prophet to preach a message that would not be accepted and regarded. However, that is not the case as the point in verse 9 is that YHWH charged Isaiah to continuously proclaim the message and even though the prophet would be relentless in proclaiming the message to this people, the message would not be understood or regarded. In any case, if it is understood and regarded, that will further unfold their hardness of heart. That is, they will not apply themselves to repentance and return to God. Ultimately, their refusal to accept the message of the prophet would be the basis for their judgment (Lang et. al 2008). Consequently, verse 10 makes it clear that in as much as they remain disobedient to God’s words, their hearts will remain unreceptive or calloused (*hašmēn*), their ears dull (*hakbēd*) and their eyes blind (*hāša’*) to the truth. As a result, Israel would face YHWH’s judgment which is a consequence of its habitual refusal to obey God’s words.

In summary, verses 9 and 10 introduce the reader to the message and the task that God gave to the prophet. The message was such that it will manifest the habitual refusal of Israel to apply herself to YHWH’s word. Thus, they are condemned not to comprehend the message. Evidently Isaiah preached with such simplicity and clarity (28:9-10) but his audience remained adamant and would not listen. The more his audience became hardened and refused to accept the message (Oswalt, 1986).

ii. Isa. 11-12

This opens with the cry of disappointment, ‘Lord for how long...’ (11a), and this cry does not imply refusal or a demand that God justifies himself in relation to the task (Oswalt, 1986). The fact is that, the prophet is concerned for his people. The question of “how long” (*ad-mātay*) is Isaiah’s cry of dismay, lamentation and pain over the hopelessness that lays ahead (Clements, 1980). The fact is that, the prophet is concerned for his people and was wondering if there is any possibility of hope or restoration after God’s judgment and devastation in 11b (Smith, 2007). In verse 12, the Lord God Most High, appears to provide a reply, yet, the reply is not comforting but distressing. The justice of God would surely be carried out as there would be no reprieve for Judah (cf. Duet 28:21; 63, 29:28). The land would be rendered desolate (cf. Lev 18:25-27).

## **6. Isa 6:13 (the Holy Remnant)**

This verse concludes chapter 6, the text of study. This verse, nonetheless, continues as an explanatory note to the question in verse 11a, “how long” and as an explanatory note, it further explains the gloomy picture created in verse 11b and through its use of botanical analogy or imagery, brings to the fore, both a connotation of judgment and one of hope (Hon,

2019). In other words, regardless of what appears to be a sure painful end, it offers faint but sure ray of hope (Oswalt, 1986).

The wordings in verse 13a are very instructive in interpreting the verse. The word (tenth), suggests a remnant and this imply people who will remain after the destruction of the land (cf. 11b). Interestingly, this remnant will be burnt again (Smith, 2007), that is, this remnant will again be faced with extermination. Verse 13b further clarifies the message in verse 13a. That is, just like when a tree (oak or terebinth) is cut down, the stump is usually left to the ground alone while the remaining brush is burnt. However, 13b emphasizes that the holy seed (*zāra' qōdeš*) comes forth from the stump that is left on the ground and thus, this indeed indicates life that still remains in the tree that was hitherto cut down. This is mostly a discussion of hopelessness, for the positive promise is only a very small source of hope.

In summary, verse 13 affirms that the desolation will be complete '...Still in it there is a tenth, it will burn...' Buchanan, comments on this a follows: "How long, asks Isaiah, is this hardening process to proceed? The answer comes clearly till the nation be no more, till it be destroyed root and branch, and the country which it now inhabits be left full of uninhabited ruins and untilled" (110). The inevitability of the destruction steers the prophet in the eyes but immediately, the text speaks of hope and a time or moment of restoration (Buchanan 110). Commenting of the holy seed (*zāra' qōdeš*), Hon writes:

The "seed of holiness" finds no better point of reference than those whom YHWH will send far away – the remnant. Like a stump which has indestructible life in it, the remnant will once again sprout and grow in the land when hardening and judgment are past. Thus, when they turn back to YHWH, a sign of healing will be evidential from rehabilitation of their land; a point alluded to at the end of YHWH's mission statement for Isaiah in vv. 9-10 (Hon, 2019 p.47).

This holy seed (*zāra' qōdeš*), is not specifically identified in the text, but Isa. 4:3 speaks about the holy ones in Jerusalem at the end of time. It is attributed to Israel generally by scholars as Israel is called 'a nation of the Holy One' (*gōy qādōš*) in Exodus 19:6 and a people holy to YHWH in other places (cf. Lev. 19:2; Deut. 7:6) (Hon, 2019).

### **Evaluating Isaiah's Call in Isaiah 6:1-13**

From the analysis of Isa 6:1-13, it is clear that Isaiah was called by YHWH and the call was intended for a purpose. That is, YHWH called Isaiah in order that Isaiah might be his mouth piece to YHWH's people, Israel. Essentially, the text highlights certain important dynamics in our understanding of prophetic call. The interaction between Isaiah and YHWH brings out the following points.



- i. YHWH took the initiative to call Isaiah.–Isaiah did not choose himself.
- ii. YHWH prepared Isaiah and made him worthy and credible for the mission he was to entrust to him
- iii. Isaiah accepted the offer of YHWH to prophetic ministry
- iv. Isaiah's acceptance of the prophetic call akin to the fact that he realized YHWH's mercy upon him, he knew YHWH had prepared him and the only logical response was to volunteer himself
- v. The identity of Isaiah as a prophet and one to embark on a prophetic ministry is guaranteed by the YHWH
- vi. Isaiah was given a specific message, to be delivered to a particular people whom he personified
- vii. The prophetic ministry of Isaiah was YHWH's ministry and Isaiah was to carry out the ministry as prescribed by YHWH
- viii. YHWH only has the power to call, commission and send forth anyone for prophetic ministry

Isaiah 6:1-13 as analyzed above, provides a model for prophetic ministry in the contemporary Nigerian society. The prophet is like any other person in the society except that the prophet is chosen, called and set aside for a prophetic mission (Umoren, 2022). The choice of anyone as a prophet also implies some measure of preparedness, a process where the chosen one is made adequate. Prophetic ministry thus, is not to be arbitrarily taken up and while one may actually wish or feel or may be interested in embarking on prophetic ministry, in as much as the person is not called, chosen, commissioned and sent, there can be no prophetic ministry. Prophetic ministry cannot be forced but is freely given by YHWH (Umoren, 2022).

### **Conceptualizing Prophetic Ministry in Contemporary Nigeria**

Prophetic ministry within the context of contemporary Nigeria, entails hearing from God and speaking for God. It requires that one hears from God through the means by which God chooses to speak and reveal himself and his word. Thus, at the heart of prophetic ministry is the Holy Spirit who is the principal agent of evangelization. Furthermore, prophetic ministry presupposes the manifestations of prophetic gifts and usually can be embarked upon by any Christian community or Church. Also, prophetic ministry ordinarily, is built on the gift of prophecy and revelation and in view of this; prophetic ministry guides the church of God and the society. More than anything else, prophetic ministry is not about telling the future but is all about communicating God's love and salvific mission of Jesus Christ to the Church and the society at large. With this in view, prophetic ministry embodies propagating the message of salvation, bringing hope to the world and engineering positive and Christ like change in the society. Primarily therefore, prophetic ministry is to edify, encourage and comfort the people of God (cf. 1Cor14:3).

### **Issues Peculiar to Prophetic Ministry in Contemporary Nigeria**

Prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria is without a doubt faced with a lot of issues that have made prophetic ministry not only cloudy but questionable. Significantly, a prophet (*nābī'*) is one who is called or one who is appointed. In other words, the prophet is “one who communicates divine revelation” (Umoren, 2022). However, it does not seem to be the case that some persons who are into prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria are called or actually communicate divine revelation. Thus, prophetic ministry appears to be populated by persons who do not enjoy divine mandate or persons who have not been called by God into prophetic ministry. It is therefore the case that these set of persons, force prophetic ministry upon themselves (Umoren, 2022). They more or less call themselves, bestow on themselves mandate or mission but are not under the direction of divine power.

Moving forward, prophetic ministry presupposes divine encounter and at the heart of this encounter is the process of preparation which greatly establishes a connection between the worlds be prophet and the divine. This also implies some level of education, both physical and spiritual with the aim of achieving a level of understanding and better places the one who embarks on prophetic ministry on a credible platform to operate as an instrument of God (Olugbenga, 2001). Thus, some of the contemporary prophets of today have not experienced the humbling presence of God, have not been exposed to what God’s prophetic mission is all about and the dire implication is a show of ignorance, pride and utter disconnect with the import of prophetic ministry in a battered world.

It is important to stress the fact that prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria has missed the target and this sorry situation is manifested in the emphasis placed on healing, miracles, signs and wonders. The self-acclaimed prophets, who are in the business of prophetic ministry, have become self-trained medical practitioners and would claim to have the spiritual power and anointing to heal almost all sicknesses. In some other forms, one sees the merchandising of the prophetic ministry (Olugbenga, 2001), the selling of miracles, obtaining of forms for particular fee before counselling sessions, selling of anointing oils, handkerchiefs, offering of gifts which usually is monetized for prayer sessions etc. Another dimension that is very popular in contemporary prophetic ministry in Nigeria is the prosperity theology or gospel which has completely relegated the gospel message of conversion or repentance and holiness in view of salvation of souls for prosperity as the goal and aim of Christianity and prophetic ministry (Adedeji, 2017). Salvation so to speak has become for the highest bidder.

Finally, prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria is bedeviled with heretical and wrong doctrinal teachings by these self-acclaimed prophets and prophetesses, who do not have any measure of understanding and knowledge of the prophetic ministry of Jesus and as such, mislead many on account of their half-backed knowledge on what the prophetic mission of the church of

God is and should be. Worrying also is the conspicuous blend of African Traditional Religious practices with the prophetic activities (Oluwola, 2023). These prophets in the discharge of their so called prophetic ministry carry on or acts like native doctors, carrying out rites and rituals synonymous to rites and ritual in African Traditional Religion. What one observes thus, is diabolism in view enhancing their prophetic activities and making accurate prophecies etc. (Olugbenga, 2001). Regrettable, these prophets do not attract their audiences to God rather, they are the center of attraction and as such, they draw all to themselves.

### **Implications of Isaiah's Call (Isa 6:1-13) to Prophetic Ministry in Contemporary Nigeria**

The issues pointed out above as plaguing prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria today can be resolved if the call of Isaiah in Isa 6:1-13 is internalized and appropriated within the context and practice of prophetic ministry. Therefore, as exposed by the text of Isa 6:1-13, the one who takes up prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria must be called just like Isaiah was called. The call gives substance, credibility and identity to the prophet in question and the mission undertaken at large. That one is called presupposes that one is sent and more than anything else, one is sent with a specific message into prophetic ministry. In view of this, prophetic ministry negates arbitrariness as it is a serious divine mandated venture and can only be guided, directed and led by God. Lastly, there are a number of persons already parading themselves as prophets in the prophetic space in Nigeria and to mitigate the damage done by this group of persons; the church of God must safeguard the prophetic ministry by way of focusing on the true message of prophetic ministry which is the call to a new life in Christ Jesus. A life that is open to all who freely accept Jesus Christ and submit to him.

At the heart of Isaiah's message was to call Israel to return to YHWH and be faithful to him; prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria must make the proclamation of the message of salvation its priority and seek to build a society where righteousness, equality, justice and the respect of human dignity are its hallmark. Isaiah remained faithful and was not concerned with what he was to benefit from the mission. Persons involved in prophetic mission in contemporary Nigeria must not be motivated by material things and economic gains. Isaiah as a model of prophetic ministry, labored to the end, he was selfless and dedicated even when the attitude of Israel was unyielding to his message. Prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria must also become selfless and consistently yielding to God's directives. In view of this, it is pertinent to stress that Isaiah was fulfilled as the unyielding attitude of Israel did not in any way imply that Isaiah failed in his mission. Isaiah succeeded as he proclaimed the message to its fullness regardless of Israel's behaviour. This has serious implications for the modern prophet in Nigeria as the God who calls and entrusts the mission, grants fulfillment regardless of how the message is received or welcomed by the people. In essence,

fulfillment is not to be sought in material things or in financial acquisition but solely in complete dedication and fulfillment of the mission or mandate entrusted to the prophet.

### **Conclusion**

This paper emphasizes the fact that a prophet is essentially one who speaks the mind of God to God's people. Thus, the prophet is called by God, commissioned by God and sent to carry out specific mission. This paper in analyzing the text of Isa 6:1-13, shows that Isaiah was called by God into prophetic ministry and essentially, Isaiah was qualified by God; as he was prepared and made adequate for the mission. Significantly, prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria must draw or find inspiration from the prophetic ministry of Isaiah. In essence, the call of Isaiah provides a veritable foundation upon which prophetic ministry in contemporary Nigeria can built upon. The standard established in the text of Isa 6:1-13 can be adopted by Christian denominations in Nigeria as a basis to confirm the prophetic spirit and to monitor prophetic activities.

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