

Isaiah 6: 1-13 as a Paradigm for Prophetic Engagement in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the text of Isaiah 6:1-13 in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the call of Prophet Isaiah and the dynamics involved in his call to prophetic ministry. Isaiah 6:1-13 established that God is the one who calls and bequeaths prophetic mission on the one he chooses. However, in Nigeria, it is the case that some arbitrarily embrace prophetic engagement, imposing a prophetic mission on themselves without being called by God and without passing through any form of training or preparation necessary for such a vocation. This paper thus evaluated the implications of Isaiah 6:1-13 as a paradigm for prophetic engagement in Nigeria. Therefore, it is argued that if Isa 6:1-13 is properly understood and appropriated, prophetic engagement in Nigeria will be enhanced and devoid of the negative issues associated with it. The historical-critical method of biblical exegesis was deployed. This paper discovered that Isaiah 6:1-13 represented the call of Isaiah into prophetic ministry and that Isaiah, who hitherto was unclean before the encounter with YHWH and other members of the divine assembly, was cleansed and subsequently called into prophetic function with a specific mission. The paper discovered that prophetic engagement in Nigeria is fraught with issues, which include: lack of adequate theological and spiritual formation, commercialization of prophetic ministry, practice of syncretism, etc. The paper concluded that prophetic engagement is the sole prerogative of God. The paper recommended that Christian denominations should adopt the prophetic paradigm of Isaiah in Isa 6:1-13 as a model for discerning and supervising prophetic engagements in Nigeria.

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

1.0 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, to foster a 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 a specific mandate, including prophetic anointing to function as prophets or prophetesses. Interestingly, one wonders if the claims that they enjoy a divine mandate are true, as the activities of some contradict what one expects of someone who enjoys a 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.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The study of Isa 6:1-13 brings up the debate among scholars whether Isaiah 6:1-13 is a call narrative describing the call of Isaiah into prophetic ministry or not. Also, considering the fact that Isaiah 1:1-5:30 clearly shows that Isaiah was already involved in prophetic activities, raises the question of placement. That is, why place the call of the prophet in chapter 6, and what role does Isaiah chapter 6 play in terms of validating Isaiah as a prophet? Furthermore, Isaiah 6:1-13 is studied in view of establishing a paradigm for prophetic engagement in Nigeria.

This is important in the sense that prophetic engagement in Nigeria today is somewhat bedeviled with issues that stem from individuals arbitrarily embracing prophetic engagements,

exploiting prophetic ministry for selfish aims, and even confusing prophetic engagements with the practice of African Traditional Religion. Thus, prophetic engagement in some cases is characterized by abuses that cause great spiritual, psychological, emotional, and even financial trauma to unsuspecting Christians who, unfortunately, fall victims of these untrained and self-styled prophets. These views have also been reflected in Omosor (2019), that many Christian clerics are misrepresenting the gospel and abusing Christianity for personal aggrandizement.

There is a need to emphasize the fundamentals that qualify anyone to engage in prophetic activities. That is, God is the initiator of prophetic call, the one called is prepared and given a mandate or a mission by God, and the called necessarily works for God. Therefore, this paper interrogates Isaiah 6:1-13 as a call narrative, depicting the call of Isaiah by God into prophetic ministry. In line with the above, this paper attempts to establish Isaiah 6:1-13 as a paradigm for prophetic engagement in Nigeria. Finally, it argues that if the text of Isa 6:1-13 is properly understood and imbibed, persons who are involved in prophetic engagements in Nigeria will be adequate in the discharge of the prophetic responsibilities.

1.2. 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 Jeremiah's call narrative in Jeremiah chapter 1 (Allen, 2023). Furthermore, the structure and language of Isaiah 6:1-13, are argued to be 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). If the text of Isaiah 6:1-13 is taken to be a throne room vision purely and not a call narrative, and considering that the prophet Isaiah was already prophesying in chapters 1-5, then the question that is asked is, where is the call narrative in the scroll? The argument can only be resolved by concluding that, instead of choosing between both, 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 within a vision and manifests like Old Testament call narratives in the likes of the calls of Moses and Jeremiah. Furthermore, he established a parallel between the response of Isaiah, who already volunteered to do God's work (Isa 6:8), with 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: (I) Isaiah's vision of God (6:1-4), (II). Isaiah's sin and its cleansing (6:5-7), (III). Isaiah's commission (6:8-10) (IV). Isaiah's difficult ministry and Israel's difficult future (6:11-13).

For Groenewald (2012), Isaiah 6:1-13 is a call 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 of the prophet in 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.

1.3. Historico-Literary Analysis of Isaiah 6:1-13

To situate the historical context of Isaiah 6:1-13, the opening verse (Isa 6:1) dates the narrative to the year that King Uzziah died. That is, Isaiah's theophany and prophetic ministry began in 8th century Judah, from the year King Uzziah died (Motyer 1993). Interestingly, the opening verse in chapter 1 (Isa 1:1) mentions Isaiah's theophany and particularly informs the reader that Isaiah's prophetic ministry spanned the reigns of four Judean Kings (Motyer 1993). It should be stressed that peace and economic stability prevailed during the reign of King Uzziah, and this was occasioned by the dormant state of Assyria. However, the rise of Tiglath-pileser III to the Assyrian throne changed the entire situation. Assyria, therefore, was set to conquer both Israel and Judah and other neighboring nations, and in this turbulent political crisis, Judah was required to make up its mind in

terms of its allegiance (to YHWH or Assyria) as regards its security (Motyer 1993). It was during this period of a difficult political situation that Isaiah began his prophetic ministry.

The arrangement of the book of Isaiah shows that Isaiah engaged in prophetic activities between Isa 1:1-5:30 before the narrative concerning his call by God into prophetic ministry in chapter 6. Thus, it is clear that Isaiah functioned as a prophet before his call in chapter 6, and this raises the question of chronology (House 1993).

In view of this, Isa 6:1-13 is understood to be positioned in its appropriate place in the entire corpus, and it is a linking text. It performs the function of linking what comes before it (Isa 1:1-Isa 5:30) and what comes after it (Isa 7:1-Isa 12:6) (House 1993). Furthermore, Isaiah chapters 1-5 which contain three main prophetic messages from Isaiah (rebellious act of the people and their judgment, a call to true worship and social justice and prophecy of future hope and restoration) serve as introduction to the entire book and Isaiah chapter 6 in its present position vindicates all the prophetic utterances in chapters 1-5 (Constable 2023). Thus, chapter 6 is not just a justification that Isaiah is a prophet but constitutes the heart of the answers to the problems raised in chapters 1-5 (Constable 2023). Isaiah chapter 6 is placed in its appropriate position in the corpus, and very importantly, chapters 1-5 provide adequate information that enables proper understanding of the content of chapter 6. Essentially, chapters 1-6 have the same thematic line that binds the six chapters together (Israel, Israel's rejection of YHWH, Idolatry and lack of social justice) (Beuken 2004). Isaiah chapter 6, therefore, serves as a conclusion to chapters 1-5 and an introduction to chapters 7-12 (Campbell). Isaiah was indeed involved in a prophetic mission before his call (Isa 1:1-Isa 5:30), and chapter 6, which presented his call, incorporated the prophetic engagements that predated it. Therefore, what was (Isa 1:1-Isa 5:30) and what began (Isa 6:1-13) are not exclusive but inclusive, pointing to Isaiah's call and prophetic ministry.

1.4 Analysis of the Text (Isa 6:1-13)

As regards the literary structure of Isa 6:1-13, a careful and detailed reading of Isa 6:1-13, would reveal that there exists a clear demarcation 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 Sends Isaiah)
5. Isa 6:9-12 (YHWH Declares the Mandate or Message to Isaiah)
6. Isa 6:13 (the Holy Remnant)

1.4.1 Content Analysis

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

The opening words "In the year that king *Uzziah* died" show that the prophet Isaiah dated the event in the text at the death of king *Uzziah* at about 740BC and at about this time, *Tiglath Pileser* of Assyria was threatening Judah (Leclerc, 2007). 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 a 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 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 uncleansed in the eyes of humans (Motyer, 1993). Thus, the darkness of

death that was upon King *Uzziah* was symbolic. That is, the prophet Isaiah saw in the king's death the nation, its plight, and its problem (Motyer, 1993). Apart from the death of 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 Hosts.

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 proclamation was repeated continuously, Holy! Holy! Holy (*qādôš, qādôš, 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 trisagon, 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.

ii. 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 others (cf. Isa 5:8; 11; 18; 20:21), now pronounces it to himself. The experiences compelled 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 people's, in keeping with God's character" (Oswalt, 1986). The unclean lips 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 Hosts (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.

iii. 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. Isaiah experiences grace as the Lord God of Hosts 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 engagement is essentially linked to holiness.

iv. 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 Hosts. One gets 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: 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 to respond.

The "us" in YHWH's statement "...and who will go for us, is a plural of consultation and possibly refers to the heavenly host, 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 volunteers, 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 rūha nādībāh (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, Lowrie & Moore, 2008). Evidently, Isaiah was prepared and ready to commit himself to the service of God. Lastly, it appears the prophet, having experienced the mercy of God, 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, and makes it possible to recognize the possibility of service; the total experience leads to an offering of oneself (1986, p.186).

v. Isa 6:9-12 (YHWH Declares the Mandate to Isaiah)

a. 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)) is 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 or 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 these people, the message would not be understood or regarded. However, 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 since they remain disobedient to God’s words, their hearts will remain unreceptive or calloused (hašmên), their ears dull (hakkbêd), and their eyes blind (hāšā’) 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. A message that confirms Israel’s continuous disobedience to God. 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).

b. 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 “how long” (‘ad-mātay) is Isaiah’s cry of dismay, lamentation, and pain over the hopelessness that lies ahead. 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. Deut 28:21; 63, 29:28). The land would be rendered desolate (cf. Lev 18:25-27).

vi. 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 a faint but sure ray of hope (Oswalt 1986).

The wording in verse 13a is very instructive in interpreting the verse. The word (tenth), suggests a remnant, and this implies 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 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...' The inevitability of the destruction stares the prophet in the eyes, but immediately, the text speaks of hope and a time or moment of restoration. Commenting on 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 that 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).

1.4.2 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 so that Isaiah might be his mouthpiece 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 of the mission he entrusted to him
- III. Isaiah accepted the offer of YHWH to prophetic ministry
- IV. Isaiah’s acceptance of the prophetic call is akin to the fact that he realized YHWH’s mercy upon him, and he volunteered himself
- V. Isaiah’s identity as a prophet embarking on prophetic engagement 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

1.5 Conceptualizing Prophetic Ministry in Contemporary Nigeria

Prophetic engagement within the context of contemporary Nigeria entails hearing from God and speaking for God. It requires that one should hear from God through the means by which God chooses to speak and reveal Himself and his word. Thus, at the heart of prophetic engagement is the Holy Spirit, who is the principal agent of evangelization. Furthermore, prophetic engagement

presupposes the manifestations of prophetic gifts and can be embarked upon by any Christian community or Church. Also, prophetic engagement ordinarily is built on the gift of prophecy and revelation, and in view of this, prophetic ministry guides the church of God and society. More than anything else, prophetic engagement is not about telling the future but is all about communicating God's love and salvific mission of Jesus Christ to the Church and society at large. With this in view, prophetic engagement embodies propagating the message of salvation, bringing hope to the world, and engineering positive and Christ-like change in society. Primarily, therefore, prophetic ministry is to edify, encourage, and comfort the people of God (cf. 1Cor14:3).

1.6 Some Issues Peculiar to Prophetic Engagement in Contemporary Nigeria

Prophetic engagement 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 (nābî') is called 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 this set of persons force prophetic engagement or ministry upon themselves (Umoren 2022). They more or less call themselves, bestow on themselves a mandate or mission, but are not under the direction of divine power.

Moving forward, prophetic engagement presupposes divine encounter, and at the heart of this encounter is the process of preparation, which greatly establishes a connection between the world of the prophet and the divine. This also implies some level of education, both physical and spiritual, to achieve 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 engagement 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 a particular fee before counselling sessions, selling of anointing oils, handkerchiefs, offering of gifts, which are usually monetized for prayer sessions, etc. Another dimension that is very popular in prophetic engagement in Nigeria is the prosperity theology or gospel, which has completely relegated the gospel message of conversion or repentance and holiness in view of the 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 engagement 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-baked knowledge of 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 act like native doctors, carrying out rites and rituals synonymous with rites and rituals in African Traditional Religion. What one observes thus is diabolism in view, enhancing their prophetic activities and making accurate prophecies, etc. (*Olugbenga*, 2001). Regrettably, these prophets do not attract their audiences to God; rather, they are the center of attraction, and as such, they draw all to themselves. Becoming the God of men instead of men of God.

1.9. Implications of Isaiah's Call (Isa 6:1-13) to Prophetic Engagement in Nigeria

The issues pointed out above as plaguing prophetic engagement in 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 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 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 several 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 proclaim the message of salvation as 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 a prophetic mission in 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 Nigeria must also become selfless and consistently yield 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.

1.8 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 a specific mission. This paper analyzes the text of Isa 6:1-13, showing 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 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 be built. 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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