

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE LORD TO HIS PEOPLE AND TO THE WORLD**

*January, 1981*

### **TO THE WORLD**

There is no faithfulness or love in the land. The people do not acknowledge me as God. They make promises and break them. They lie, steal, murder, and commit adultery. Crimes increase, and there is one murder after another (1). The evil that the people have done keeps them from returning to their God. Idolatry has a powerful hold on them, and they do not acknowledge the Lord (2).

I will bring such disasters on mankind that everyone will grope about like a blind man. On the day when the Lord shows his fury, not even all their silver and gold will save them. The fire of his anger will destroy the whole earth. He will put an end - a sudden end - to everyone who lives on earth (3).

Shameless nation, come to your senses before you wither and die like a flower, before the burning anger of the Lord comes upon you, before the day when he shows his fury. Turn to the Lord, all you humble people of the land who obey his commands. Do what is right and humble yourselves before the Lord. Perhaps you will escape punishment on the day the Lord shows his anger (4).

### **TO GOD'S PEOPLE**

Even my people are as stubborn as mules. How can I feed them like lambs in the meadow (5)? The arrogance of my people cries out against them. Their sins make them stumble and fall. They have been unfaithful to the Lord. Their children do not belong to him. So now they and their land will soon be destroyed (6).

My people have not listened to the Lord or accepted his discipline. They have not put their trust in the Lord or asked for his help. Prophets are irresponsible and treacherous. Priests defile what is sacred and twist the law of God to their own advantage. But the Lord is still in the city. He does what is right and never what is wrong. Every morning, without fail, he brings justice to his people, and yet the unrighteous people keep on doing wrong and are not ashamed.

Look! I have wiped out whole nations! I have destroyed their cities and left their walls and towers in ruins. The cities are deserted, the streets are empty. . .no one is left. I thought that then my people would have reverence for me and accept my discipline, that they would never forget the lessons I taught them. But soon they were behaving as badly as ever (7).

My people have lost land that was rightfully theirs because they insisted on going for help to those who had no help to give (8). My people have broken the covenant I made with them and have rebelled against my teaching. Even though they call me their God and claim that they are my people and that they know me, they have rejected what is good.

My people have become like any other nation and are as useless as broken pots.

Stubborn as wild donkeys, my people go their own way. They have gone off to seek help from the world and have paid other nations to protect them (10).

The more altars and temples my people build for removing sin, the more places they have for sinning! I write down countless teachings for my people, but they reject them as strange and foreign (11). My people have built palaces but have forgotten their own Maker (12). So I will abandon my people until they have suffered enough for their sins and come looking for me. Perhaps, in their suffering, they will try to find me (13).

What I want is plain and clear - I want your constant love. I would rather have my people know me than have them burn offerings to me (14). Therefore, I will destroy anyone who goes up on the roof and worships the sun, the moon, and the stars. I will destroy those who have turned back and no longer follow me, those who do not come to me and ask me to guide them (15). I will punish my people who are self-satisfied and confident, who say to themselves, "The Lord never does anything one way or the other." Their wealth will be destroyed. They will never live in the houses they are building or drink wine from the vineyards they are planting (16).

### **JUDGMENT IS COMING UPON THE WORLD AND UPON GOD'S PEOPLE**

The people of the world will be punished for their pride and arrogance and for insulting the people of the Lord Almighty. The Lord will terrify them. He will reduce the gods of the earth to nothing, and then every nation will worship him each in its own land (17).

Just wait! Wait for the day when I rise to accuse the nations and kingdoms in order to let them feel the force of my anger. The fire of my fury will destroy the whole earth. Then I will change the people of the nations, and they will pray to me alone and not to other gods. Then they will obey me.

At that time you, my people, will no longer need to be ashamed that you rebelled against me. I will remove everyone who is proud and arrogant, and you will never again rebel against me. I will leave a humble and lowly people who will come to me for help. My people who survive will do not wrong to anyone, tell no lies, nor try to deceive. They will be prosperous and secure, afraid of no one (18).

When the Lord comes to shake the earth, people will hide in holes and caves in the rocky hills to try to escape from his anger and to hide from his power and glory (19).

Listen! The Lord has called out his proud and confident soldiers to fight a holy war and punish those with whom he is angry. Listen to the noise on the mountains - the sound of a great crowd of people, the sound of nations and kingdoms gathering. The Lord of Armies is preparing his troops for battle. They are coming from far-off countries to the ends of the earth. In his anger, the Lord is coming to destroy the whole country.

Howl in pain! The day of the Lord is near, the day when the Almighty brings destruction (20). The day of the Lord is coming - that cruel day of his fierce anger and fury. The earth will be made a wilderness, and every sinner will be destroyed. I will bring disaster on the earth and punish all wicked people for their sins. I will humble everyone who is proud and punish everyone who is arrogant and cruel. Those who survive will be scarcer than gold. I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place on that day when I, the Lord Almighty, show my anger (21).

Yes, a day is coming when human pride will be ended and human arrogance

destroyed. Then the Lord alone will be exalted. On that day, the Lord Almighty will humble everyone who is powerful, everyone who is proud and conceited. Human pride will be ended, and human arrogance will be destroyed. Idols will completely disappear, and the Lord alone will be exalted on that day (22).

### **GOD IS MERCIFUL TO THOSE WHO REPENT AND TURN TO HIM**

Put no more confidence in mortal men. What are they worth (23)? Do not join in the schemes of the people. Do not be afraid of things that they fear. Remember that I, the Lord Almighty, am holy. I am the one you must fear. Because of my awesome holiness, I am like a stone that people stumble over. I am like a trap that will catch the people. Many will stumble; they will fall and be crushed. They will be caught in a trap (24).

Yet, the Lord is compassionate, and when you cry to him for help, he will answer you. The Lord will make you go through hard times, but he himself will be there to teach you, and you will not have to search for him anymore. If you wander off the road to the right or left, you will hear his voice behind you saying, "There is the road. Follow it" (25).

When you plant your crops, the Lord will send rain to make them grow and will give you a rich harvest, and your cattle will have plenty of pasture. The oxen and donkeys that plow your fields will eat the finest and best fodder. On the day when the forts of your enemies are captured and their people are killed, streams of water will flow from every mountain and every hill. The moon will be as bright as the sun, and the sun will be seven times brighter than usual, like the light of seven days in one. This will happen when the Lord bandages and heals the wounds he has given to his people (26).

Plow new ground for yourselves, therefore. Plant righteousness and reap the blessings that your devotion to me will produce. It is time for you to turn to me, your Lord, and I will come and pour out blessings on you (27). Even now, repent sincerely and return to me with fasting and weeping and mourning. Let your broken heart show your sorrow; tearing your clothes is not enough. Come back to the Lord, your God. He is kind and full of mercy; he is patient and keeps his promises; he is always ready to forgive and not punish (28).

### **A TIME OF RESTORATION AND GLORY IS COMING FOR GOD'S PEOPLE**

My people will become like the sand of the sea, more than can be counted or measured. Now God says to them, "You are not my people." But the day is coming when he will say to them, "You are the children of the Living God" (29).

I am going to take my people into the desert again. There I will win them back with words of love. Then once again they will call me their husband. At that time, I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and birds so that they will not harm my people. I will also remove all weapons of war from the land and will let my people live in peace and safety.

My people, I will make you my wife; I will be true and faithful. I will show you my constant love and mercy and make you mine, and you will acknowledge me as Lord. At that time, I will answer the prayers of my people. I will make rain fall on the earth, and the earth will produce grain and grapes and olives. I will establish my people in the

land and make them prosper. I will show love to those who were called "unloved". And to those who were called "not-my-people" I will say, "You are my people," and they will answer, "You are our God" (30).

Yes, the days are coming when grain will grow faster than it can be harvested, and grapes will grow faster than wine can be made. The mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with it. I will bring my people back to their land. They will rebuild their ruined cities and live there. They will plant vineyards and drink the wine. They will plant gardens and eat what they grow. I will plant my people on the land I gave them, and they will not be pulled up again. The Lord, your God, has spoken (31).

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|------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) Hosea 4:1b-2       | (16) Zephaniah 1:12-13     |
| (2) Hosea 5:4          | (17) Zephaniah 2:10-11     |
| (3) Zephaniah 1:17-18  | (18) Zephaniah 3:8-9       |
| (4) Zephaniah 2:1-3    | (19) Isaiah 2:21           |
| (5) Hosea 4:16         | (20) Isaiah 12:3-6         |
| (6) Hosea 5:5, 7       | (21) Isaiah 13:9, 11-13    |
| (7) Zephaniah 3:2, 4-7 | (22) Isaiah 2:10-12, 17-18 |
| (8) Hosea 5:11         | (23) Isaiah 2L22           |
| (9) Hosea 8:1b-3       | (24) Isaiah 8:12-15        |
| (10) Hosea 8:8-9       | (25) Isaiah 30:19b-21      |
| (11) Hosea 8:11-12     | (26) Isaiah 30:22-26       |
| (12) Hosea 8:14a       | (27) Hosea 10:12           |
| (13) Hosea 5:15        | (28) Joel 2:12-13          |
| (14) Hosea 6:5-6       | (29) Hosea 1:10            |
| (15) Zephaniah 1:7a, 6 | (30) Hosea 2:14, 15, 18-23 |
|                        | (31) Amos 9:13-15          |