

## Jeremiah

### Lesson 2: The Crisis (Within and Without)

#### Memory Verse **Hand out Scriptures to read**

**Jeremiah 2:3** (NKJV) *Israel was holiness to the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; disaster will come upon them," says the Lord' "*

**What is a Crisis?** A situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful, especially a time when action must be taken to avoid complete disaster or breakdown.

#### A Quick History

**Deuteronomy 12:8** (NKJV) *"You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes—*

**\*Judges 17:6** (NKJV) *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

**Judges 2:1–4** (NKJV) *Then the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. <sup>2</sup> And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? <sup>3</sup> Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' " <sup>4</sup> So it was, when the Angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept.*

#### Death of Joshua

**Judges 2:7–10** (NKJV) *So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel. <sup>8</sup> Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. <sup>9</sup> And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. <sup>10</sup> When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.*

## Israel's Unfaithfulness

**Judges 2:11–15** (NKJV) <sup>11</sup> *Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; <sup>12</sup> and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. <sup>13</sup> They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. <sup>14</sup> And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. <sup>15</sup> Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.*

Think about the problem of the next generation not having the values and beliefs of the one before it. How have we, as a church, dealt with this issue? How can we transmit our values to those who follow us?

**Read Pierson's Appeal**

## The Two Kingdoms

### Jeroboam's Gold Calves

**1 Kings 12:25–31** (NKJV) *Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel. <sup>26</sup> And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: <sup>27</sup> If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah." <sup>28</sup> Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" <sup>29</sup> And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. <sup>30</sup> Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. <sup>31</sup> He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi. **\*2 Kings 13:11** (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> *And he did evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, but walked in them.**

### Abijah's Rebuke of Jeroboam

**2 Chronicles 13:5–11** (NKJV) <sup>5</sup> Should you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt? <sup>6</sup> Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord. <sup>7</sup> Then worthless rogues gathered to him, and strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and inexperienced and could not withstand them. <sup>8</sup> And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord, which is in the hand of the sons of David; and you are a great multitude, and with you are the gold calves which Jeroboam made for you as gods. <sup>9</sup> Have you not cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests, like the peoples of other lands, so that whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may be a priest of things that are not gods? <sup>10</sup> But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the priests who minister to the Lord are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites attend to their duties. <sup>11</sup> And they burn to the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense; they also set the showbread in order on the pure gold table, and the lampstand of gold with its lamps to burn every evening; for we keep the command of the Lord our God, but you have forsaken Him.

**\*2 Chronicles 33:9, 10** (NKJV) So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. <sup>10</sup> And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.

**2 Chronicles 33:21–23** (NKJV) Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them. <sup>23</sup> And he did not humble himself before the Lord, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

**2 Kings 24:8–9** (NKJV) Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done.

### Two Evils

**Read Jeremiah 2:1–28**

**Jeremiah 2:11–13** (NKJV) *Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit.*

<sup>12</sup> *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate,*” says the Lord. <sup>13</sup> *“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

**Jeremiah 2:23–24** (NKJV) <sup>23</sup> *“How can you say, ‘I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals’? See your way in the valley; Know what you have done: You are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways, <sup>24</sup> A wild donkey used to the wilderness, That sniffs at the wind in her desire; In her time of mating, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves; In her month they will find her.*

### The Babylonian Threat

**Jeremiah 25:8–12** (ESV) *“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, <sup>9</sup> behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. <sup>10</sup> Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. <sup>11</sup> This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. <sup>12</sup> Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste.*

**\*Jeremiah 26:7** (NKJV) *So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.*

**Psalms 78:60–62** (ESV) *He forsook his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among mankind, and delivered his power to captivity, his glory to the hand of the foe. He gave his people over to the sword and vented his wrath on his heritage.*

### Swearing Falsely

**Jeremiah 5:1** (NKJV) *“Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment, Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her.*

*Abraham asked God, if there are 10 righteous in the city...*

## **Don't Let It Happen**

### **An Earnest Appeal to Church Leaders**

**ROBERT H. PIERSON**

Robert H. Pierson (1911 - 1989). Without sound preaching, the church will soon lose its way. This former General Conference president (1966–1979) sounded a clarion note of warning. Only A.G. Daniells served longer than he as denominational president. Pierson was a prolific writer. He is credited with authoring some 28 books, many of them translated into multiple languages, as well as hundreds of articles. Shortly before his retirement, he delivered this earnest appeal to the leaders of the world church gathered for an Annual Council meeting on October 15, 1978. His message seems almost prophetic.

This will be the last time that in my present role I shall stand before the world leaders of my church, your church, our church, and I have a few words to leave with you.

I take my thoughts from something that Elder and Mrs. Ralph Neall have written describing how typically a sect evolves into a church. They say a sect is often begun by a charismatic leader with tremendous drive and commitment, and that it arises as a protest against worldliness and formalism in a church. It is generally embraced by the poor. The rich would lose too much by joining it, since it is unpopular, despised, and persecuted by society in general. It has definite beliefs firmly held by zealous members. Each member makes a personal decision to join it and knows what he believes. There is little organization or property, and there are few buildings. The group has strict standards and controls on behavior. Preachers, often without education, arise by inner compulsion. There is little concern about public relations.

And then it passes on to the second generation. With growth there comes a need for organization and buildings. As a result of industry and frugality, members become prosperous. As prosperity increases, persecution begins to wane. Children born into the movement do not have to make personal decisions to join it. They do not necessarily know what they believe. They do not need to hammer out their own positions. These have been worked out for them. Preachers arise more by selection and by apprenticeship to older workers than by direct inner compulsion.

In the third generation, organization develops and institutions are established. The need is seen for schools to pass on the faith of the fathers. Colleges are established. Members have to be exhorted to live up to the standards, while at the same time the standards of membership are being lowered. The group becomes lax about disfellowshipping nonpracticing members. Missionary zeal cools off. There is more concern over public relations. Leaders study methods of propagating their faith, sometimes employing extrinsic rewards as motivation for service by members. Youth question why they are different from others, and intermarry with those not of their faith.

In the fourth generation there is much machinery; the number of administrators increases while the number of workers at the grass roots becomes proportionately less. Great church councils are held to define doctrine. More schools, universities, and seminaries are established. These go to the world for accreditation and tend to become secularized. There is a reexamination of positions and modernizing of methods. Attention is given to contemporary culture, with an interest in the arts: music, architecture, literature. The

movement seeks to become “relevant” to contemporary society by becoming involved in popular causes. Services become formal. The group enjoys complete acceptance by the world. The sect has become a church!  
Brethren and sisters, this must never happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church! This will not happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is not just another church—it is God’s church!

But you are the men and women sitting in this sanctuary this morning on whom God is counting to assure that it does not happen.

Already, brethren and sisters, there are subtle forces that are beginning to stir. Regrettably there are those in the church who belittle the inspiration of the Bible, who scorn the first 11 chapters of Genesis, who question the Spirit of Prophecy’s short chronology of the earth, and who subtly and not so subtly attack the Spirit of Prophecy. There are some who point to the Reformers and contemporary theologians as a source and the norm for Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. There are those who allegedly are tired of the hackneyed phrases of Adventism. There are those who wish to forget the standards of the church we love. There are those who covet and would court the favor of the evangelicals; those who would throw off the mantle of a peculiar people; and those who would go the way of the secular, materialistic world.

Fellow leaders, beloved brethren and sisters—don’t let it happen! I appeal to you as earnestly as I know how this morning—don’t let it happen! I appeal to Andrews University, to the Seminary, to Loma Linda University—don’t let it happen! We are not Seventh-day Anglicans, not Seventh-day Lutherans—we are Seventh-day Adventists! This is God’s last church with God’s last message.

You are the men and women, the leaders, whom God is counting on to keep the Seventh-day Adventist Church God’s remnant church, the church God has destined to triumph!

The servant of the Lord says, “Fearful perils are before those who bear responsibilities in the Lord’s work—perils the thought of which makes me tremble” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 391). And in Ezekiel 22:30 we read, “I looked for a man among them who could build a barricade, who could stand before Me in the breach to defend the land from ruin” (NEB).

I believe this morning, fellow leaders, that God is looking for men and women, intrepid leaders, men and women who love God’s church and God’s truth more than they love their lives, to see that this church under God goes through to the kingdom. The task ahead of us is not going to be easy. If I understand the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy aright this morning, ahead lies a time of trouble, a time of challenge such as this church and this world have never before known.

The servant of the Lord tells us: “The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of

this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God Who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 204, 205).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church had its alpha years ago. You and I are the leaders who will face the omega that will be of the same subtle, devilish origin. Its effect will be more devastating than the alpha. Brethren, I beg of you, study, know what is ahead, then with God’s help prepare your people to meet it!

“God calls for men who are prepared to meet emergencies, men who in a crisis will not be found standing on the wrong side” (*Review and Herald*, November 5, 1903).

“We are pressing on to the final conflict, and this is no time for compromise. It is no time to hide your colors. When the battle wages sore, let no one turn traitor. It is no time to lay down or conceal our weapons, and give Satan the advantage in the warfare” (*Review and Herald*, December 6, 1892).

And then I call attention to a vision the Lord’s servant had, in which she saw a ship heading toward an iceberg. She said: “There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, ‘Meet it!’ There was not a moment’s hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. With a crash she struck the ice. There was a fearful shock, and the iceberg broke into many pieces, falling with a noise like thunder to the deck. The passengers were violently shaken by the force of the collision, but no lives were lost. The vessel was injured, but not beyond repair. She rebounded from the contact, trembling from stem to stern, like a living creature. Then she moved forward on her way.

“Well I knew the meaning of this representation. I had my orders. I had heard the words, like a voice from our Captain, ‘Meet it!’ I knew what my duty was, and that there was not a moment to lose. The time for decided action had come. I must without delay obey the command, ‘Meet it!’” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 205, 206).

Fellow leaders, it may be that in the not too distant future you will have to meet it. I pray God will give you grace and courage and wisdom.

Finally, “What a wonderful thought it is that the great controversy is nearing its end! In the closing work we shall meet with perils that we know not how to deal with; but let us not forget that the three great powers of Heaven are working, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that God will bring His purposes to pass. He will gather from the world a people who will serve Him in righteousness” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 391).

What a wonderful assurance we have this morning, brethren and sisters, that you and I are in God's work. This work is not dependent on any man; it is dependent on our relationship with Him. There is only one way for us to face the future, and that is at the foot of the cross. A church with its eyes upon the Man of Calvary will never walk into apostasy.

Thank you, brethren and sisters, for giving me the privilege of serving you for the past 45 years, and may God bless every one of you.