

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 5, The Composition of Jeremiah

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 5 on The Composition of Jeremiah.

I really want to applaud you for your efforts in studying the book of Jeremiah.

I know it's different from so many other parts of the Bible. It's the longest book actually in the Old Testament. And there are times, maybe as you're initially approaching the book, where you say, how do I make sense of this long, confusing book? What I would like to look at in the next couple of sessions is just thinking about how we approach the book of Jeremiah as a book. And in this particular session to talk about the composition of the book of Jeremiah and how the book of Jeremiah was put together.

I think we understand that even though Jeremiah is the word of God, and we believe again, 2 Timothy chapter three, verse 16, all scripture is God-breathed. It's given to us by God. 2 Peter 1.21, holy men spoke as they were moved along like the sails in the wind by the Holy Spirit.

But it's not a book that fell out of heaven. It's also not a book where every time Jeremiah preached, someone was there to transcribe what he said and that was immediately added to the book. It was not a book where God simply took Jeremiah up on the mountain and revealed to him what he should write down.

There was a long process involved in putting together this long book. Jeremiah's ministry extended from the time that he was called in the 13th year of Josiah, 626 BC, until sometime around 580 BC. So, we're talking about a ministry that lasted approximately 50 years.

And so, putting together and representing a book that portrays that ministry, obviously there was a long and involved process in this. There are a couple of quotes from people from some scholars as they approached the book of Jeremiah. First of all, Andrew Sheed makes this comment, and maybe you can resonate with this as you're trying to read through Jeremiah and understand the book.

Jeremiah is long, full of repetitions, non-linear in its chronology, and constantly cycling from one genre to another. R.P. Carroll in his commentary on the book of Jeremiah, who takes really, I think, an overly skeptical approach to understanding the message of this book, does make a couple of statements, though, that we need to

think about. He says, to the modern reader, the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are virtually incomprehensible as books.

He then says this: the person who is not confused by the book of Jeremiah does not understand it. And I remember at times writing my dissertation on the book of Jeremiah and thinking that's exactly right. But again, I think that's an overly skeptical approach.

As we're thinking about Jeremiah as a book, I want to give us two images that we maybe could think of. Imagine someone trying to represent in one book the ministry of someone like Dr. Billy Graham. A long ministry, snippets of his sermons, often without chronology or time or events going on in his life.

Trying to make sense of that and put together a picture of Dr. Graham's ministry may be a very difficult thing to do. Another image that I think about is that we might think of the book of Jeremiah like we do an old farmhouse. As you look at that house, you realize that there was an early house there, and there have been several additions, wings, and extensions added on as different family members came in, as the house perhaps changed ownership.

Sometimes we have to go and look at the floor plans of that house to understand why and how it was put together. So, what I would like us to look at today in this session is just thinking about the composition and how the book of Jeremiah was put together. Then, in the session that follows, doing an overview of the book of Jeremiah and understand there is an order, there is a chronology, there is a flow, and a sense to this book that helps us to understand it.

One of the issues that comes up as we're looking at the composition of the book of Jeremiah is that we recognize that it consists of different genres and types of material. In fact, in one of the earlier critical studies of the book of Jeremiah, Bernard Duhem made a distinction between the poetry in the book of Jeremiah and the prose that's in the book of Jeremiah. Sigmund Mowinckel came along and, adding to that study, noted that there are three different specific genres in the book of Jeremiah.

He referred to these as the A, the B, and the C materials. The material that Mowinckel identified was the poetic oracles of Jeremiah. These are the brief oracles in poetic form.

They're very common, especially in chapters 1 to 25. Critical scholars have tended to look at this as the primary way that the prophets communicated their message. In fact, if we look at the prophetic books in general, they are filled with poetic oracles where with vivid imagery, parallelism, and just powerful quick images, the prophets have conveyed their message.

The second type of material that Mowinckel identified was the B material or the narrative accounts or the stories from the prophet's life and ministry. One of the things that makes the book of Jeremiah unique is that there are a number of these stories from the life of Jeremiah. Really, the only other prophetic book that's like Jeremiah in this regard is the book of Jonah.

Jonah is a very brief book. Comparing it to the book of Isaiah, Isaiah has 66 chapters, but there are really only two sections, chapters 6 to 8, chapters 37 to 39, that have narratives and stories from the life of Isaiah. So, Jeremiah is unique in this regard.

There's a much more extensive use of narrative. And then finally, the C materials are what Mowinckel referred to as the prose sermons. These are sermons rather than being in the form of poetic oracles; these are sermons that are more long-flowing prose accounts.

Imagine a transcript of your pastor's sermons. There are passages where Jeremiah's preaching, in some sense, looks like the transcript of a sermon. One example of one of these, and I think a very significant part of the book of Jeremiah, and I wanted to read just a couple of verses here, is the prose sermon that we have in chapter 11.

The prose sermon in chapter 11 focuses on the idea that God is punishing Israel and Judah for their violations of the covenant. So obviously, it's a very important concept in the book of Jeremiah. And here's the way this passage begins.

It says in verse 1, the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, hear the words of this covenant and speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. You shall say to them, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, curse be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. From the iron furnace saying, listen to my voice and do all that I command you.

So, you shall be my people and I will be your guide that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers to give them a land flowing with milk and honey as it is this day. Then I answered, so be it, Lord. And so, the passage even goes on further.

It gives us more of this account, more of this sermon. And so, we don't simply have brief poetic oracles here. We have an extended sermon.

Now, what critical scholars have done with these three different types of material is that they have tended to view the poetry of the book as being the earliest sections and the more real and authentic Jeremiah. And they have taken the narratives and the prose sermons and viewed those more as a later reinterpretation of the prophet. And they have tended to see these as being edited by the Deuteronomistic editors.

And to varying degrees, they see these later sources and these later materials reinterpreting the prophet Jeremiah and his message. So, there's actually become a question in critical scholarship: how much of the historical Jeremiah can we really know? Is the portrait of Jeremiah in this book a realistic and honest one, or have these later sources basically given us a different person than what we would really see? I wanted to just think about this in a couple of ideas and a couple of responses just in terms of that. I believe that one of the reasons for these different sources is just the obvious possibility that there were varying ways that Jeremiah communicated his message.

Sometimes, maybe as a street preacher, it was advantageous to communicate in powerful, brief images and oracles. But I think it's also very likely that there were times when Jeremiah went to the temple and preached his temple sermon, that there were more extended sermons and something more like what we would hear from our pastor on a Sunday morning. I think the second thing is that it's not surprising to us that many of the words and phrases in the sermons and in the narratives in Jeremiah are similar to the book of Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic history.

The book of Kings, which is part of that history, was written in 550 BC. Jeremiah concluded his ministry sometime around 580 BC. So, I think it's very likely that the people that were involved, the editors that were involved in the composition of these historical books and their final editing in 550 BC and the sixth century in the time of the exile, may have also been involved in the final composition and editing of the book of Jeremiah. These books cross-pollinated each other, and oftentimes, the direction of influence is very difficult to determine.

I think the third thing is to realize that as we compare the Deuteronomistic history books, as they've been labeled, and we compare the book of Jeremiah, there are unique ideas in the book of Jeremiah that make its message distinctive. Deuteronomy, for example, or the history of the Deuteronomistic history in Kings is going to emphasize that God judges Jerusalem because of the wickedness of Manasseh and his 55 years.

God says I'm going to wipe Jerusalem like a dish. Jeremiah is more going to focus on the latter part of the Davidic dynasty and the failure of the kings that came after Josiah, which we looked at in our earlier lesson. Jeremiah, in contrast to Kings, is going to emphasize much more strongly the idea of restoration.

The message of restoration in Kings is very minimal. At the end of the book, we have Jehoiachin being released from prison, but a clear statement or purpose of what God is going to do in all the restoration is not fully there. So, Jeremiah looks more like the book of Deuteronomy in that respect than it does the Deuteronomistic history.

I think a fourth thing that we can understand from the use of poetry, prose, and narrative is that there has been, in many ways, a reflective recasting of Jeremiah. But I believe that that work was done by Jeremiah and Baruch himself. Conservative commentators like John Thompson in the NICOT commentary on Jeremiah have emphasized that Jeremiah and Baruch themselves, as they reflected over the long years of Jeremiah's ministry, came to a deeper understanding of what Jeremiah's message was about.

They came to a deeper understanding of what was God's plan and God's design and God's intention for the future. In the beginning of Jeremiah's message, Jeremiah is preaching and calling the people to repentance. During the reforms of Josiah, there's the possibility that they can avoid judgment.

But in the later recasting of that message at the end of his life, that becomes a message for the exiles, for them to return, for them to come back to God. And so I think the reflection that is going on about Jeremiah's ministry doesn't have to be Deuteronomistic editors that have revised and changed his message. It can be Jeremiah and Baruch themselves as they come to a deeper understanding of the purposes and designs of God.

And then finally, with regard to this issue of the different types of material, whether we read the poetic oracles, the prose narratives, or the prose sermons, the perspective of Jeremiah that emerges from these different materials is not that different. There is a basic theological unity to this book. There are certain key ideas that are going to come across no matter what part of the book we're looking at or what kind of materials we're looking at.

There's going to be the emphasis, Judah has broken the covenant. They have violated God's law. They have worshiped idols.

And as a result of that, they deserve God's punishment. That's not simply Deuteronomy. That's the message of the entire Old Testament.

The second key idea is that the Lord is using Babylon as the instrument of judgment. And the Lord is using Babylon as his instrument. Again, that's not just prose or poetry.

That's the message of the book as a whole. And then, as we're looking at the entire book, both in the poetic and the prose sections, there's the promise that after there has been judgment, there's going to be restoration. So, I don't believe that we need to take Jeremiah and divide it up into sources.

There's a theological unity in this book. We don't have to pit the prose against the poetry because there's a unified picture of Jeremiah that emerges from all of these

different materials. One likelihood is that there are also literary reasons why the message of Jeremiah is communicated in these different genres, in these different forms.

What Lewis Stuhlman has suggested is that the prose sermons are actually placed in the book as a way to guide us through the message and ministry of Jeremiah. And so what ends up happening is, as we have the poetic oracles of Jeremiah, all of these different images begin to bombard us. Judah is an unfaithful wife.

God is sending against the people of Judah, a roaring lion. Judah has been unfaithful to God in all these different ways. What the prose sermons do is they take all of that poetic imagery and summarize them.

In effect, they provide a cliff notes summary for us of what the message of Jeremiah was all about. So what Stuhlman suggests is that in Jeremiah 1 to 25, we have five specific prose sermons that really, in many ways, help the people of Jeremiah's day and especially help us as modern readers to be able to collate all of these poetic images together and to understand, here's what the message of Jeremiah is about. And typically these prose sermons are going to focus on the misunderstanding that the people of Judah have about their covenant with God.

They have come to believe that God is going to protect them. God is going to bless them. God is going to watch over them no matter what.

The prose sermons provide a different understanding of the covenant. Jeremiah 7, one of these summary passages, they have placed false confidence in the temple and God's presence there being able to protect them. Jeremiah 10 is a prose sermon explaining that Israel has violated the covenant by their idolatry.

Jeremiah chapter 11, a prose sermon saying, Jeremiah is warning that the people of Judah are going to experience the covenant curses because of their disobedience. The covenant was not just designed to protect them and to bless them. Jeremiah 18 and 19, prose sermons explaining the fact that Judah has had the opportunity to repent.

They have forfeited that opportunity and God is going to judge them. And so, I believe that there's actually a unity that emerges from these different literary genres. And we can see that as we look at how the prose, the poetry, the stories, and the narratives and sermons interact with each other.

There's a second issue relating to the composition of the book of Jeremiah, leaving behind some of the critical theories and things that really are a sort of precursor to this. Jeremiah is an interesting book in that, probably more than any of the other major prophets, it gives us insight into the process that was involved in the formation

of the book of Jeremiah as a book. In fact, there are references to five or six different sources and places where Jeremiah has actually composed parts of this book, or Baruch has composed parts of this book.

And then these different scrolls and sources have been put together. The key passage in all of this is Jeremiah chapter 36, verses one to three. In that particular passage, God commands Jeremiah to write down his messages, to dictate those messages to Baruch, and then to have Baruch read those messages at the temple.

The year that this takes place is the fourth year of Jehoiakim. And so what this means is that Jeremiah has been preaching for 20-plus years before he is ever specifically commanded to write down the words that he's been preaching. Now, I don't think that means that Jeremiah never recorded these, but the actual composing of these things into a book, the first time we see that happening is 20 years into the ministry of Jeremiah.

If you know the chapter, you remember what happened, Jehoiakim cuts up the scroll. And then after that, at the end of the chapter, it says in verses 23 to 26, that God commanded Jeremiah and Baruch to compose another scroll. And it says they rewrote the scroll.

Many people feel that the basic heart of the message that was found in this scroll is what we have in Jeremiah chapters 1 to 25, the words and the oracles of judgment that are found there. But it also says that when they wrote the second scroll, many similar words were added to that. And so, I believe that we can imagine the first substantive composition of the book of Jeremiah happening in the 20th year of his ministry.

And then over the next 20 to 30 years of Jeremiah's ministry, many similar words were added to those original words. There was a constant process of adding new messages, new sermons, and perhaps even casting the old sermons in light of the exile and the things that happened at the end of Jeremiah's ministry. The second mention of a source that I wanted to call attention to is that Jeremiah 29.1 tells us that Jeremiah wrote a letter after 597 to the exiles that were in Babylon.

That letter instructed them what God's plans and God's designs were for the future. Remember he said, pray for the peace of Babylon, just as you've prayed for the peace of Jerusalem. Settle in the land, build houses there, do the normal things that you do with family, serve the king of Babylon, and things will go well for you.

And then, after 70 years, God will release you, and God will send you back from exile. That was in a letter that Jeremiah composed to the exiles. And so, we can imagine that some of the words of hope, the promises that God gave through the prophet Jeremiah, may have come through that letter.

And that letter is the background to what Jeremiah has to say in chapter 29. In Jeremiah chapter 30, we have a very important section of the book in Jeremiah 30 to 33; it's referred to as the book of consolation. It's the message of hope that God gives through the prophet Jeremiah.

And the amazing thing is, is that this prophet who was commanded to give so many words of judgment at the center of the book of Jeremiah in many ways, there's a section of hope. But it tells us that Jeremiah composed these positive messages of hope into a book or a scroll. And so, we have to use our sanctified imagination a little bit, but I can imagine that the chapters that are found in 30 and 31, which are poetry, and 32 and 33, which are prose, may have originally stood as an independent unit.

And they were representative of Jeremiah's messages of hope. A fourth scroll or a fourth source is mentioned for us in Jeremiah 51, verses 59 to 64. And in the last two primary chapters in the book of Jeremiah 50 and 51, we have the oracles against Babylon.

And they are these long and elaborate messages of judgment against the people of Babylon and against the nation of Babylon and the king whom God had used to punish Israel. But at the end of those oracles, it tells us that Sariah, who appears to be the brother of Baruch and another scribe that assisted Jeremiah, actually took this scroll to Babylon with Zedekiah. When Zedekiah was there meeting with the king of Babylon sometime before the exile took place, it says that Sariah read the scroll in Babylon and then performed a symbolic act.

He took the scroll, he tied a rock around it, and then he threw that scroll into the Euphrates river. And signifying the doom, the final destruction of the nation of Babylon. But here's another source, another scroll, again, not coming from an editor, not coming from a later person, but from Jeremiah himself.

In chapters 26 to 45, as we've already stated, we have a number of biographical narratives and stories from Jeremiah. And as these stories conclude in Jeremiah chapter 45, there is a word of promise that's given to Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch. So I think there's the possibility rather than Jeremiah writing these as an autobiography, there is the likelihood and the possibility that Baruch was the one who composed these stories about Jeremiah.

The message of hope, the promise of hope, given to Baruch in chapter 45 functions as a colophon, identifying the author or the person who's had a significant role in composing this section of the book and pronouncing God's blessing on him. It's like a postscript. In the Psalms, we have superscriptions that give us titles. We could have that going on with Baruch in that chapter.

And then finally, one of the other things that's interesting about the formation of the book of Jeremiah is a book, is that we often see the duplication of certain passages from one part of the book, and they're found in another part of the book. For example, Jeremiah chapter 23, verse 20, says that the anger of the Lord will not cease until he's accomplished all that he's intended. That same statement appears in the book of Consolation in chapter 30, verse 24.

Chapter 23 talks about the Lord raising up a righteous branch that will come out of the house of David. That passage is repeated in Jeremiah 33, 15, and 16. So I think, again, in this process is Jeremiah and Baruch are recasting. They're coming to understand Jeremiah's ministry in a deeper way, or Jeremiah is ministering in different contexts, in different situations.

Messages from various parts of his ministry may have been reused, reapplied to different contexts and situations. Some of the oracles of judgment about Judah in the early parts of the book are reapplied and stated toward Babylon in the latter parts of the book. Early in Jeremiah, we have Jeremiah saying that God's judgment is going to come in the form of an enemy from the North that's going to attack Judah.

In Jeremiah chapters 50 and 51, there's an enemy from the North that's going to attack Babylon as well. So Jeremiah, in a way that really is not true of any other book, gives us insight into the way that different parts of Jeremiah's message were composed in different scrolls, in different sources. And then over the long process of Jeremiah's life, those were put into the form that we have them today.

There's the possibility that even after Jeremiah has died, Baruch finishes this process, or the editors responsible for bringing the entire Hebrew canon together and giving it order and design may have had their hands in this process as well. But we believe, and this is a conviction that I have about this book as I study it, is that God not only inspired Jeremiah in the preaching of this message, but God also directed Jeremiah, Baruch, and any inspired editor who may have been involved in the process of the formation of that book as well. And as difficult and as complex as this process may have been, God had his hand in this, and God was preserving the message of Jeremiah in the form that he desired and designed first for the people of Israel and then later for the church because of the ongoing message that this book has for us.

Now there's a final issue related to the book of Jeremiah that again, I think reflects the development and the formation of this book and the composition. And that's the fact that our ancient copies and manuscripts of the book of Jeremiah reflect two very different versions of the book of Jeremiah. And one version of the book is reflected in the Greek translation of the Old Testament referred to as the Septuagint.

And then the other version is reflected in the Hebrew text or the Masoretic text, which is the book of Jeremiah and the form of Jeremiah that's found in our Hebrew

Bibles. The Masoretic text is also the basis for our English Bibles. So, all of our English Bibles, whether it's King James version, ESV, NIV, NASB, all of them are based on that Hebrew Masoretic version of the book.

But as we look at the two different forms of the book of Jeremiah, one in the Septuagint and one in the Masoretic text, there are some very interesting differences between these two versions of the book. First of all, the Greek text in the Septuagint is 14% shorter than the version that we have in the Masoretic text. So that means that there are at least, or approximately 2,700 words in the Masoretic text that are not found in the Greek text.

Now those words don't substantively change the essence of Jeremiah's ministry, but it does provide us some different insights and different readings of various passages. A second difference between the two texts is that the Greek text has a different order and arrangement. In our English Bibles that are reflective of the Masoretic text, the oracles that Jeremiah preached against the nations come at the end of the book in chapters 46 to 51.

In the Greek version, those oracles come after chapter 25, verse 13. So, they're found in the middle of the book. The other interesting thing is, is that the order of those oracles in the Greek version of Jeremiah is different from the one that we have in our Hebrew version and again, our English Bibles.

A third difference is that there are, at times, significant passages in the most famous or most important example, like Jeremiah 33 verses 14 to 26. We're talking about a significant section of the book that is found in the Hebrew version of the book but is missing in the Septuagint version of the book. Finally, the last difference is that there are additions to the Masoretic text, like headings to sermons in chapters 2, chapter 7, chapter 16, chapter 27, where there's an introductory title given.

There are expressions like, thus says the Lord, that appear 65 times more in the Masoretic text than in the LXX. That indicates that the LXX likely reflects a more early version of the book with things that have been added to it by the Masoretic version. Now, when people first hear about this, it raises a couple of questions.

I know that this is confusing for my students. Which one of these versions comes first? Which one of these is more original? And then the large question is, which one of these is the word of God for us? We might think that it's obvious that the Hebrew version is original because Jeremiah spoke in Hebrew. Greek is a translation.

But as we've already said, the things that are added and the additions in Jeremiah that are found in our Hebrew Bibles indicate that it's more likely that those things were added to an earlier version rather than something that was deleted or taken out. We've also come to a better understanding of the book of Jeremiah through the

discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which moved our earliest versions of the Old Testament that we had back almost a thousand years. What we've come to understand from the Dead Sea Scrolls is that there were likely Hebrew versions of Jeremiah in the early period that reflect what's found in both the Septuagint and the Masoretic text.

In the fourth cave at Qumran, there were some important fragments, and these are very tiny, small fragments of the book of Jeremiah that were found there. But the interesting thing is that two of these fragments, 4q Jeremiah A and 4q Jeremiah C, based on what's there, and again, tiny fragments, seem to reflect what we have in our Masoretic text. On the other hand, another fragment of the book, 4q Jeremiah B, found in the same cave, seems to reflect the readings that we have in the LXX.

And so, what this suggests for us is that the changes that occur in the Greek are not the result of translating from Hebrew to Greek. They're not those kinds of changes, but it reflects that there was originally a Hebrew prototype for the Septuagint and a Hebrew version of the book that's reflected in the Masoretic text as well. So should we be bothered by this, and how do we ultimately resolve this? I believe that these two versions are related to two specific issues.

Number one, they are related to the length of Jeremiah's ministry. Remember, his ministry occurs over a 50-year period. And so, it is likely, again, that Jeremiah and Baruch may have had their hands significantly in the composition of both of these versions of the book.

The LXX perhaps reflects an earlier version of Jeremiah, and then the MT reflects the final form of the book of Jeremiah as Baruch, Jeremiah, or any other inspired editors involved in this had God's insight into the ultimate significance of Jeremiah's ministry. I think the other reality that gives rise to these two different versions is the fact that Jeremiah's ministry occurs over a broad geographical area. And remember that in the days after the exile, we have Jews that are in Babylon.

We have Jews that are living back in the land, and ultimately, Jeremiah, Baruch, and other refugees are living in Egypt. They do not have fax machines. They do not have printing presses.

They do not have FedEx express where they can simply communicate and send things back and forth to each other. And so, I believe that these two different versions of the book of Jeremiah likely arose because of the different geographical locations in which the book was being read and produced. And so, it's likely that the LXX version was circulated in Egypt and it was an earlier form of the book of Jeremiah.

The later and fuller book of Jeremiah, and one that focuses more extensively on the exiles, on Babylon, on the hope for Israel's future, was the one that circulated in Babylon and that was brought back to the land by the Jews and became the primary version of the Jewish people. My understanding of this is that we don't really need to be bothered by the whole issue of which one of these is inspired. I believe that both of them reflect the word of God.

Another interesting issue is that as we move to the time of the New Testament, the Septuagint was the Bible in the Old Testament of the early church. The Masoretic text was the Hebrew canon for the Jews and the rabbis. So many people have raised the question, shouldn't we be using the LXX as the Christian version of the book of Jeremiah? Well, again, I believe that the church was using the Septuagint because of the specific context that they were ministering in.

They were ministering to people who spoke Greek. They were not making a statement about the superiority of the LXX version of Jeremiah to the MT. It's simply the version that communicated most effectively to the culture that they were in.

I believe that both of them accurately reflect the word of God. I believe that as scholars examine and study the book of Jeremiah, it often is important for them to compare the two different versions, perhaps to understand how the book has developed or perhaps to understand a better reading in a specific text or passage. But ultimately, God was directing this entire process from the time of the early version of Jeremiah composed at some point in his ministry to the final reflections of Jeremiah and Baruch about what Jeremiah had to say about the future of Israel and God's restoration.

For example, remember that one of the passages not found in the Septuagint is Jeremiah chapter 33, verses 14 to 26. When we look at this passage, we see that it deals with the future of the house of David. It repeats the passage found in Jeremiah chapter 23: God is going to raise up a righteous branch for David.

It says that David will never lack a man to sit on the throne. So, it was important in the context of the exile for the people that were living in Babylon. It was important for them to understand that there was a hope based on the promises that God had made to David.

That passage also says the Levites will never lack a man to execute the office of priesthood. As the people were living in exile and coming back to the land to rebuild the temple, it was important for them to understand that God was going to restore the worship that had taken place at the temple. God is going to restore the Levites, the priesthood, and all of those things that are important to Israel's future when the second temple is built.

So, both of these versions of the book of Jeremiah are inspired. They simply reflect the message of Jeremiah at different times and from different perspectives in his ministry. To wrap all this up, we've covered a lot in this message or in this particular session dealing with the composition of the book.

Andrew Sheed has a quote about the Masoretic text and why it's important for us as Christians. And why I think it's likely that as God was directing the process of Jeremiah being formed as scripture, that this became the canonical book of Jeremiah in the Hebrew canon. Sheed says this says the Masoretic text has a special place for us as Jeremiah's words to us.

Not only was it his last and final version, but its target audience, the exilic community in Babylon was in Jeremiah's eyes, the one group of people with a future in the divine plan of salvation. The seeds of the church were planted in Babylonian soil. And so, as we look at the hope that Jeremiah is giving to us about the exiles and about the return from exile in salvation history, that's ultimately the seed of the church.

God's people are going to come back from exile and God is going to raise up Jesus to bring about the ultimate restoration from exile. And so it's very important for us to understand in the final form of the book of Jeremiah the fact that God was talking about the restoration of his people. Going back to chapter 24, the good figs were the people who were living in Babylon, not because of their righteousness, but because of the hope that God was placing on them, being the ones who would come back from the exile and that God would bring back to the land.

The bad figs were those that remained in the land. And the final form of Jeremiah is going to stress the hope for Israel's future. That's not with the people that live in the land.

The hope for Israel's future is not with the exiles that are living in Egypt. The hope for Israel's future is with the exiles and God fulfilling the covenant promises that he's made to David and to Israel and to his people. And Jeremiah, with all of the judgment that is there, the final form of that book emphasizes that hope and that consolation and the restoration that's going to come in the future.

As we've looked at the composition of the book of Jeremiah, we focused on three specific issues today. We've talked about the different types of material and the reasons why the book of Jeremiah is made up of both prose and poetry. We've talked about the evidence within the book itself that Jeremiah was composed from different sources, different scrolls that were put together and placed together.

But again, Jeremiah and Baruch are the ones who had the major hand in this process. And then, finally, we've looked at the different versions of Jeremiah that are reflected in the ancient manuscripts. First of all, the Septuagint and the MT tried to

come to an understanding again that this is pointing us to the fact that there has been growth and development in the book of Jeremiah, but ultimately, this book is a unity that reflects God's message of judgment and hope for the people of Israel.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his instruction on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 5 on The Composition of Jeremiah.