

## Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 6, Book Overview

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session six, An Overview of the Book of Jeremiah.

In our last session, we talked about the formation and composition of the book of Jeremiah and the process that God used to bring the book of Jeremiah about.

God inspired the book. God inspired the prophet, both in his spoken word and his written word, but the book was not something that simply fell out of the sky, and there was a process involved in that. To further help us to understand the book of Jeremiah as a book, I'd like to give us an overview of the book of Jeremiah in this session, where we understand the larger message of the book and how it all fits together as a unit.

Sometimes when we're studying the Bible, we pull out individual passages from a book. As you're reading this book, you may find certain passages that are more interesting to you than others, but it's important to see the forest as well as the trees. I believe that when we understand how the book fits together as a unit, we have a better understanding of the individual passages that are there as well.

Let me remind you of a couple of the quotes from our last lesson. Jeremiah is definitely a difficult book. You may be feeling that you may be experiencing that as you're reading through it and studying in connection with this study.

As I reference things very quickly, sometimes in the videos, you may say, where is that? How can I find that? But remember what Andrew Sheed says in his book, *A Mouthful of Fire*. Jeremiah is long, full of repetitions, nonlinear in its chronology, and constantly cycling from one genre to another. Then, R.P. Carroll, in his more cynical way, to the modern reader, the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are virtually incomprehensible as books.

The person who is not fully confused, or the person who is not confused by the book of Jeremiah, has not understood it. And so, if people are making those kinds of statements, you may be asking the question, how can I ever understand the book of Jeremiah? How can this book that seems so strange be put together in such a different way from the books that we read? How can I understand it? I'm convinced that the book of Jeremiah is probably not like any book that you have on your Kindle right now. And so, I want to give us an understanding of how to read this as a unit, how to understand it as a book.

The book of Jeremiah is very different from Paul's epistles. The book of Jeremiah is different from the Gospels. The book of Jeremiah is even different from the different books that maybe you're more familiar with in the Old Testament, like Genesis, Psalms, or Proverbs.

But there is a unity that emerges out of this book that I think helps us to understand it. Again, critical scholars have wanted to view the book as disorderly, as confusing, as something that has been put together in rather a haphazard way. William McCain, who was the author of the International Critical Commentary on Jeremiah, a very important commentary on the book, compares Jeremiah. He refers to it as a rolling corpus.

And in a sense, he compares the book of Jeremiah to a snowball rolling down a hill. And what you have in this rolling corpus is that basically the earlier messages of the book of Jeremiah, as they grow and develop, they accumulate material like a snowball rolling down a hill. Now, I think you're fairly aware of the fact that a snowball rolling down the hill is not designed very cohesively.

And that's his understanding of the book of Jeremiah. Walter Brueggemann, I think reflecting a very postmodern approach to the book, sees the influence of various editors and redactors in the book of Jeremiah. Basically, what he understands the book to be is that there's this cacophony of all these different voices who have different perspectives on the suffering of the exile, the political crisis that's going on.

What happens to this group of people and these refugees in this exile? And when is God going to bring the people back? And again, developing over a long period of time. And the book of Jeremiah, in a sense, contains all of these discordant voices, and somehow, the word of God emerges from that. I believe that if we are convinced about the fact that Jeremiah is the word of God, that it's inspired by God, and that God has directed this book as it's put together, there is going to be a much more orderly message that emerges from it.

Now, that doesn't diminish, at times, the difficulties of putting this book together. It doesn't diminish the fact that the book is not put together in a chronological way like we're used to reading books, but there is an order and a design that's reflected behind this. Lewis Stuhlman, as he's dealing with the book of Jeremiah, refers to the book and describes the book in this way.

He says it is a reflection of order amid chaos. And in some sense, perhaps the apparent disorder, as we look at the book of Jeremiah, may, in fact, be a reflection of the times in which Jeremiah is living. And so, we have these discordant images, and we have these different genres being imposed one over the top of each other, in a sense, to reflect the time period in which Jeremiah lives.

There are places in the book of Jeremiah where it's very confusing to try to follow the chronology because Jeremiah seems to be in various prisons and different locations. You may be reading through the book and asking the question, how did he get from this prison to that prison? And why is there not an explanation for that? But in a sense, that reflects the disorder of Jeremiah's life. It reflects the disorder of a man who often has to preach on the run or a man who has to record the scroll of his prophecies and then go into hiding because it's not safe for him to appear in public.

It reflects what happens to a man who's in prison until the time that the city of Jerusalem is captured. And then the capture of that city becomes his release from prison. So, there's order amid chaos.

A verse that has helped me to understand the progression and the development of the book of Jeremiah is found right at the very beginning of the book in Jeremiah chapter one, verse nine. And what we have in Jeremiah chapter one in verse nine is the Lord says to the prophet, I have put my words in your mouth. And then in verse 10, see, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms.

And then he gives us five verbs that describe the message in the ministry of Jeremiah. Here's what your words are designed to do. They are designed to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

Jeremiah was a prophet to both Judah and the nations. I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah doesn't just speak about Judah and Israel.

Jeremiah speaks about Egypt, Babylon, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and the people who lived around Israel. His message extends beyond Israel. And so, there are parts of the book that are going to focus on Jeremiah as a prophet to Israel and Judah.

That's the primary focus in chapters one to 45. But there is also going to be a focus on Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations and chapters 46 to 51 are going to give us the oracles that Jeremiah speaks against those people. Chapter 25, which provides a summary and a conclusion of the first section of the book and a hinge into the second section of the book, is again going to focus on how his message relates to the nation.

So, understanding that Jeremiah is a prophet to Israel and to the nations helps us to understand the design and the order of the book. And then we go back to these six verbs, to pluck up, to break down, to destroy, to overthrow, to build, and to plant. Those verbs are going to appear at various places in the book of Jeremiah as summaries of both his message of judgment and his promises of salvation.

They're going to be in chapter 25. They're going to be in chapter 31. They're going to be in chapter 45.

Depending on whether those sections deal with judgment or salvation, those verbs will summarize Jeremiah's message. So, as we're looking at this, we begin to structure and order Jeremiah's message by understanding that he is a prophet of judgment and a prophet of salvation. God is going to judge Judah.

He's going to destroy them for their covenant infidelity. But then Jeremiah is a prophet of salvation. God is going to restore Israel.

God is going to judge their enemies, and God is going to ultimately make things right. Just understanding that basic conception of the book of Jeremiah gives us, in part, the structure of what the book is about. Stuhlman, again, in his book, *Order Amid Chaos*, says that chapters 1 to 26, or chapters 1 to 25, the first half of the book, are basically dealing with Jeremiah's ministry of tearing down and plucking up.

And the old world and the old order and all of the things that belong to Israel's past history, God is uprooting that. In a sense, God is overturning the covenant promises that he's made to Israel and bringing on them instead the covenant punishments. The things that Israel has trusted in to provide security in their relationship with God, those things are being torn down and plucked up in chapters 1 to 25.

But in the second half of the book, there is going to be an emphasis on God building and planting. There's going to be the judgment of exile. There's going to be the narrative in chapters 37 to 44 that focus on the events that happened in Jeremiah's life surrounding the fall of Jerusalem.

But there is a much greater emphasis in the second half of the book on the building up, the new covenant, and how God is going to bring the people back to the land. So, in a sense, as you're working through the book of Jeremiah, remember that in the first half of the book, chapters 1 to 25, there's a focus on tearing down and plucking up. In the second half of the book, in chapters 26 and 52, the actual tearing down occurs.

But in the midst of that, it shows us how God is going to rebuild and replant his city and his people and what he's going to do for them after the judgment takes place. Now, I believe that we can further divide the book. We've got the tearing down of the old order in the first half.

We've got the rebuilding of the new order in the second half. I believe that we can actually see more specific sections in order to the book. And let me just mention a couple of those.

Andrew Sheed, again, in his book, *A Mouthful of Fire*, which I think is one of the best theological studies of the book of Jeremiah that I've read, talks about the fact that the book of Jeremiah is a story, not just about the life of a prophet, but it's the story about the word of God beyond the idea of there being the first half of the book that deals with tearing down and uprooting and the second half of the book that deals with building up and planting again. I think we can see more specific divisions and more specific ways that the book of Jeremiah is arranged and structured. Andrew Sheed, in his book, *A Mouthful of Fire*, says that the story of the book of Jeremiah is essentially a story of the word of God.

It's not just the life of Jeremiah. It's not a biography of Jeremiah, but it's the story of what happens when the word of God becomes a fire in Jeremiah's bones. He begins to preach and communicate that.

What happens to that word as it's going out? And so, Jeremiah, in a sense, becomes a living representation of the word of God. He becomes an embodiment of that word. And so, the things that happened to Jeremiah, the various forms of persecution, the oppression, being thrown in a dungeon, and being threatened with his life reflect how people react to the word of God.

It's also the word of God that brings about the fall of Jerusalem. God fulfills his prophetic word. And then it's the word of God that gives hope to the people of Israel for their future, that God has not abandoned them.

And so, Sheed explains that the book of Jeremiah is structured around 14 or 15 different units that are introduced by various forms of the expression, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. So, you can see that there are three of them in chapter one, chapter one, verse four, chapter one, verse 11, chapter 13, and then chapter two, chapter seven, chapter 11, and on and on. So, as you're reading through the book of Jeremiah, pay attention to both the larger sections and the smaller sections that are introduced in some way by the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah.

Sometimes, determining where does one oracle begin or where does one sermon begin and where does another one conclude, often those types of expressions are there to help us and to guide us. So, I think that's an important structural marker in the book. The other important thing to understand is that the book further breaks down into three major sections of text.

In fact, I think a good thing for anyone beginning to study the book of Jeremiah is just to remember the chapter divisions and a basic division for these three major sections of the text. The first major division is found in chapters one to 25. And we can summarize that section very simply.

It is primarily Jeremiah's oracles and messages of judgment against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. He is announcing the coming judgment that God is going to bring against the city of Judah. The second section, chapters 26 to 45, has different types of material because now we are primarily going to have stories and episodes from the life of Jeremiah.

Again, the purpose of this is not to give us a biography of Jeremiah's life. It's not to give us a travelogue of his experiences, but it's to reflect for us the fact that Judah did not obey the word of the Lord. A recurring expression that's going to be in this section of the book is that they did not obey.

They did not listen to the word of God. And there are going to be various stories where Jeremiah is going to teach or preach the word of God. He's going to announce a message that God has given to him.

We're going to see the responses of various groups of people. Typically the response is going to be a negative one where they do not listen to what God has to say through the prophet. The final section of the book, the third major section, is found in chapters 46 to 51.

There's a clear transition here. It's easy to see because Jeremiah moves from his messages of judgment, the judgments that Judah experiences, to the messages that Jeremiah preached against the nations.

Finally, the last thing that we have in the book, chapter 52, is a postscript. It's an appendix. It's the story of the fall of Jerusalem in 587-586 BC.

And I think it's there to remind us that even at the close of Jeremiah's ministry, the thing that is looming large over Israel's history is the fall of the city of Jerusalem. In return, the people may have come back to the land, but the exile, in a sense, is ongoing until the time that God fully restores them. The exile, the fall of Jerusalem was the key event that validated and confirmed Jeremiah's ministry and his message as a prophet.

It was proof that his message was what God exactly wanted to say to the people. And so that's there as an appendix or a postscript in the book. So, once we understand these three sections, 1 to 25, 26 to 45, 46 to 51, with the final postscript, I think, again, there is an order that emerges out of the chaos.

And even though there is non-chronology here, we begin to see a basic unity in this book. Now let's go back to the first section, Jeremiah's oracles of judgment. In this section, there are going to be two primary things.

There are two primary words that, if you can remember these, I think you understand what's in this section. There is going to be an accusation, and there is going to be an indictment. The accusation deals with the fact that Jeremiah, as he's preaching this message of judgment, is not just telling the people that God is going to judge them.

He's explaining the reasons why that judgment is occurring. What have they done? How have they violated the covenant? That's the accusation. The indictment has to do with the specific judgment that God is going to bring against his people.

In what ways will God judge them? What are the specific things that are going to happen to them because of God's judgment? So, let's summarize some of the key passages that talk about God's indictment of Israel. Going back again in the early section of the book, chapter two, which I think has a formative message for the book as a whole, there's a charge about the idolatry of the people and the fact that the people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters.

They have hewed out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. The most despicable, desperate thing that Israel has done, and Judah have done is they've abandoned God and they've begun to worship other idols. In a sense, idolatry is the ultimate sin because it's a sin of disloyalty.

It's a sin of a broken relationship. It's a sin where they have been unfaithful to God in a very personal way, but it becomes the root and the basis of all of their other sins as well. Chapter two, verse 20, is an image that is going to work its way throughout the book.

For long ago, I broke your yoke, I burst your bonds, but you said I will not serve. Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree, you bowed down like a whore. And so Jeremiah is going to portray the people as God's unfaithful wife.

They are a prostitute that has been unfaithful to the Lord. Imagine if our pastor were to stand up and confront us that way on a Sunday morning. What would our reaction be? But that's an image that's going to work itself throughout the entire book of Jeremiah. The indictment continues in chapter seven.

I think one of the most famous parts and components of Jeremiah's ministry was the day that he stood up and preached his famous temple sermon. And again, the courage it took for Jeremiah to stand up and to say to the people, you've sinned. You've broken the covenant. And as a result of this, this temple that you think guarantees your protection, that you think guarantees that God is always going to bless you, you have turned this temple into a den of thieves.

In a sense, by your covenant unfaithfulness, the temple has become a hideout for Bonnie and Clyde. And because of that, God is going to destroy the temple. God is going to bring it down.

Chapter 10, another indictment, another sermon that Jeremiah preaches. They have worshiped idols, and these idols are as worthless and as lifeless as scarecrows in a melon patch. Jeremiah chapter 10, verse five.

Chapter 11, a sermon that Jeremiah preaches. The people have broken the covenant. They have not kept the terms of the covenant.

The covenant is not just about God's blessing. It also was about the responsibilities that God has placed upon them as his covenant people. And so at the end of this sermon, near the end of this, in chapter 11, verses 10 and 11, they have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers.

They have refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant I made with their fathers.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Looking at the idea of indictment in the first section of the book, we can move to chapters 22 and chapter 23. When we were looking at the history and the background of Jeremiah, we looked at chapter 22, the failures of Judah's final kings.

And remember, Jeremiah begins under the godly reign of Josiah, but very quickly, there's the ungodly reign of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Every one of them did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. The Lord indicts their leadership.

The problems that Judah had and the sin that had come into Judah's life as a nation in many ways were caused by bad leadership that had turned away from God. So, chapter 22 indicts their kings and their leaders. In chapter 23, we have an indictment of their prophets, and the spiritual leaders in Israel were as much a problem as the civil leaders.

The prophets and the priests both had abandoned their responsibility to teach the word of God. The problem with the prophets, particularly in chapter 23, is that they are preaching a message that is a reflection of their own dreams, their own ideas, and their own perspectives on what's going on in Israel's history. They are not the word of the Lord.



And the Lord says I'm going to bring judgment on these prophets because, number one, I did not sin them. And they have not stood in the counsel of the Lord. They have not received a message from me, and yet they are proclaiming this message.

And then finally in chapter 25, this section concludes by God saying that he is going to cause the people of Judah to drink the wine of his judgment. And that judgment is going to come at the hands of the Babylonians. So, throughout this section, chapters 1 to 25, there is an emphasis on indictment.

But once the indictment is made and once it becomes clear and obvious in Jeremiah's ministry that there is not going to be repentance, there also is the idea of now here is the specific way, the announcement of how God is going to bring that judgment. And what we have in chapters 1 to 25, again, often using very vivid and powerful poetry and imagery, is that there are going to be descriptions of the specific type of judgment that God is going to bring against the people. And the announcement of this coming judgment, this powerful army is going to sweep through the land of Israel and through the land of Judah, and they're going to attack the Southern kingdom and send them away into exile.

I think it's interesting that in the book of Jeremiah, as this accusation begins to come into play, Jeremiah, first of all, does not identify the specific nation that God is going to bring against them. In a sense, it adds to the mystery. There's this army that you can't politically find on a map and talk to and identify, but there's an army that's coming to attack you.

The prophet describes this army in the most vivid, powerful way possible because if the people can somehow understand how awful and terrible this judgment is going to be, then maybe they will respond they will, repent, and turn from their sinful ways. And so, after the accusation and the indictment, there are these descriptions of the judgment and of the army that's going to come, particularly in Jeremiah chapters four and five. And here's a description of the attack.

Here's the specific way that God is going to judge the people of Judah. And it says this, "...declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem and say this, blow the trumpet through the land, cry aloud and say, assemble and let us go into the fortified cities, raise a standard toward Zion, flee for safety, stay not, for I, the Lord, am bringing disaster from the north. A lion has gone up from his thicket, a destroyer of nations has set out.

He has gone out from his place to make your land a waste. Your cities will be ruins without inhabitant. For this, put on sackcloth, lament, and wail, for the fierce anger of the Lord has not turned back from us." You can imagine a scene of a national disaster.

The people are assembling into the fortified cities because an enemy is coming to attack them. And this enemy is like a lion. And again, it's not something or someone that Judah can identify.

It's this mysterious army that's coming against them. There's another description, chapter four, verse 13, "...behold, he comes up like clouds. His chariots are like the whirlwind.

His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined." And if you can somehow place yourself in the city of Jerusalem, imagine what it would be like to be under enemy attack at that time. You can get an idea of what Jeremiah is warning the people of.

In chapter five, verses 15 and 17, the Lord says, "...behold, I am bringing against you a nation from afar, O house of Israel." It is an enduring nation. It is an ancient nation.

It is a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. Their quiver is like an open tomb. They are all mighty warriors.

They shall eat up your harvest and your food. They shall eat up your sons and your daughters. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds.

They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees, your fortified cities in which you trust. They shall beat you down with the sword." So again, it's like, wow, this is going to be a terrible, awful judgment. We need to repent.

We need to change our ways. But the amazing thing is that in spite of these portrayals of what the judgment would look like, the form that it would take, the specific announcement that's coming on here, the people don't respond and don't repent of that. Finally, in chapter 20, Babylon is identified as the specific nation that God will bring against the people of Judah.

Chapter 25, again, is the concluding summary for this section. It's an important chapter in the book. Imagine it as a hinge that takes us from section one into section two. There is this message about Babylon in 25:11.

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste. And these nations shall serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. Then, after the 70 years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon in that nation.

The land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon the land all of the words which I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. So, this is Jeremiah's message.

I think an anthology, Jeremiah's Greatest Hits, describes for us all of the warnings that Jeremiah has been giving to the people from 626 BC until the time that the city of Jerusalem is going to fall. These are the types of messages that Jeremiah has been preaching. When the Lord tells Jeremiah to compose on a scroll in 605 BC, all of the words that he's been preaching against the people of Judah, Jeremiah 1 to 25, for us is a representative example of what this message was like.

It's not necessarily the exact words. It's not necessarily every sermon that Jeremiah preached, but this is Jeremiah's message of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem. The accusation, the indictment, this is what you have done.

And then the announcement: This is what God is going to do to you. This is the judgment that's going to come. Then, in chapters 26 to 45, we transition into a new set of material.

Primarily prophets or narratives from the prophet's life. In chapters 37 to 44, the closest thing that we have to a chronology in the book is the story of what happened in the days immediately before the fall of Jerusalem. And then what happens in Judah immediately after that?

What took place in Jeremiah's life, but more importantly, what took place in the lives of the nation of Judah in its last days? What we have in this last section is the warnings of judgment coming in chapters 1 to 25. The fulfillment of that judgment actually comes in the story of 37 to 44.

But along with that, these narratives from the prophet's life are again, emphasizing one key idea. The people did not listen to the word of the Lord. They did not pay attention to the messages of judgment that Jeremiah was preaching.

And part of the explanation of the book of Jeremiah as to why the exile occurred is that the people didn't listen to God's word. The exile did not occur because God abandoned his people. The exile did not occur because the Lord, in some way, had been unfaithful to his covenant promises.

The exile did not occur because the armies of Babylon were greater than the Lord, who was the God of Israel. The exile occurred specifically because the people did not listen to God's word. The various forms of persecution and opposition that Jeremiah experiences in this section of the book are being thrown in prison, threatened with death, thrown in a cistern, taken away, kidnapped, and sent to Egypt as a refugee.

All of these things are a reflection of how the people did not listen to God's word. The treatment of Jeremiah represents the word of God. In a sense, he is the living expression of God's word.

And every form of abuse that Jeremiah experiences is a reflection of how his message and God's word were rejected. We have this comment in chapter 37, verses 1 and 2. In many ways, this summarizes everything that we see in 26 to 45 in these particular stories. Chapter 37, verse 1 says, Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, remember he's the last king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Judah reigned instead of Coniah or Jehoiachin the son of Jehoiakim.

But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the Lord that he spoke through Jeremiah the prophet. Part of the issue is the kings of Israel or the kings of Judah did not listen. Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, primarily in this section, did not listen to the word of God.

But his officials, the military officers, in particular, did not listen to the word of God. They hated Jeremiah. They viewed him as a traitor.

They said we've got to get him out of earshot of the people because we don't want them to hear his message that our resistance is futile. But the people themselves did not listen to God's word as well. And so, as a result of this, Judah is guilty before God.

They have violated the covenant for hundreds of years. They have worshiped idols, but adding to that guilt is that when God sent a prophet warning them of the judgment that was coming, they did not listen. Now, I think two of the most notable examples of people not listening to the word of God are found in chapter 26 and chapter 36.

Chapter 26, I think is a second form of Jeremiah's temple sermon that is preached in chapter seven. If it's not the same sermon, it's very close. And we have the response and the reaction of various groups of people.

As soon as Jeremiah preaches this message, that tells us that the spiritual leaders and the people said, you are to die because you have prophesied that God is going to destroy his own house. They viewed him as a false prophet. Now, the people ultimately come to acknowledge that Jeremiah is a true prophet, but there's no indication of any kind of specific action that speaks of how they have responded to the word of God.

Immediately after the temple sermon in chapter 26, we have King Jehoiakim putting to death the prophet Uriah. So, this is a story right at the very beginning of this section of how the people ignored God's word. And then I think the second sort of prime example of not listening to the word of God is that we have the story of Jehoiakim cutting up, burning, and destroying the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies in chapter 36.

Jeremiah commissions Baruch, write these words down, go to the temple, proclaim the message. There are a number of officials who realize this is important. They take it to the king, he cuts it up, he burns it in the fire.

In a sense that encapsulates the response of Judah to the word of God. We don't want to hear it. And as a result of that, that's the reason for the destruction.

And that's the reason for the events that take place in chapters 37 to 44. Now, if you're familiar with the book of Jeremiah, you know that in chapters 26 to 45, there's another important message. And there's a specific section that we need to isolate within chapters 26 to 44 or 45.

And that's the book of consolation in chapters 30 to 33. And that's the message really, in a sense, that stands at the center of the book. And we imagine as Jeremiah and Baruch are putting this book together, they want to highlight the fact that judgment is not God's final word.

So, in the midst of all these stories about the rejection of God's word, in the midst of all these stories of how Jeremiah is persecuted and opposed, there's a statement at the center that God is not finished with his people. God is not going to abandon them. God is ultimately going to restore them.

God is going to make a new covenant with Israel. God is going to write his law on the hearts. And so instead of there being this continuing history of disobedience, when God restores his people in the future, they're going to be able to obey.

They will listen to God's word, and they will follow him. And this message of hope, I think, is all the more amazing. It's all the more incredible.

It's all the brighter and promising in light of the fact that it's surrounded by disobedience and judgment. So, as you're reading through the book of Jeremiah, keep your focus on the fact that at the center of the book, there's a message of hope. And then finally in chapters 46 to 51, and we'll just summarize this section, we have the judgment of the nations.

As I look at this section, I notice that this section is framed around the judgment of two superpowers. We have the judgment of Egypt at the beginning of this section. And then we have the judgment of Babylon in chapters 50 and 51.

Between that, we have the judgment of all of the smaller nations and nation-states that surrounded the people of Judah. All of them answer to God. All of them are ultimately accountable to God.

As we see the judgment of the superpowers, Egypt and Babylon, in the last parts of the section, we're reminded no nation is too great that it can avoid answering to God. And if the nations and the states and the powers and the empires of that day answer to God, then the empires and the great nations of today will as well. But in between that, the smaller city states remind us that no nation is too small that God ignores them.

And no nation is too small that they can avoid God's judgment because he will overlook them. And so, God's judgment is going to take place. God is going to judge the nations.

There is a plan that is laid out in the book of Jeremiah, where God judges Israel first, and then he judges Babylon. God uses Babylon as his instrument of judgment. Nebuchadnezzar is his servant.

But the final word is God makes things right. And the things that Judah experienced at the hands of Babylon ultimately is going to be turned back against the Babylonians themselves. God is going to make things right.

Finally, the last thing that I'd like to notice in this section is that the message that God has for the nations is not just one of judgment. There are actually promises given to three of these nations that God is going to restore their fortunes. That's the same expression that is used in chapters 30 to 33 to explain what God is going to do for Israel.

At the beginning of chapter 30, I am going to restore the fortunes of Israel after I have judged them. In other words, I'm going to bring them back from captivity. In chapter 33, at the end of the book of consolation, again, this promise, I am going to restore the fortunes of Israel.

Well, the amazing thing, as we look at the judgment of the nations, is that God's plan is not just to destroy the nations themselves. Some of these nations are also given the hope that the Lord is going to restore them as well. And so, in chapter 48, verse 47, the Lord says to Moab, after I have judged you, I will restore your fortunes.

To the people of Ammon in chapter 49, verse six, after I have judged you, I am going to restore your fortunes. And so, there is the possibility that in the time of God's kingdom, and when God restores the people of Israel, these nations will be included. But as we look at the warnings to Babylon, there is no hope.

There is no promise given to them. It is simply a message of total destruction. And the purpose of this ultimately was that God was promising the restoration of his people.

And I want to close by reading chapter 50, verses four and five, the hope that emerges for Israel in realizing that God would one day ultimately judge their nations. The Lord says this, in those days, and at that time declares the Lord, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together, weeping as they come, and they shall seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with faces turned toward it, saying, come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.

God's purpose in judging the nations was not just to vent his anger, but it was ultimately to bring about the restoration of his people and to bring into play the future kingdom when all of the nations would be included in what God had planned for Israel. We understand the book of Jeremiah, I think, in a better way when we understand its order. Jeremiah is a prophet of judgment and of salvation.

I often tell my students, if anyone ever asks you on an ordination exam, the message of an Old Testament prophet, you can probably get by simply by saying they preach judgment and salvation. That's very, very true of Jeremiah. He tears down, he destroys, he uproots, but he plants and he rebuilds.

The book of Jeremiah is also built around three sections. Number one, chapters 1 to 25, we have his messages of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem. In chapters 26 to 45, we have the story of how Judah did not obey the word of the Lord.

Then, in chapters 46 to 51, we have the oracles against the nations of how God would judge Israel, but then he would judge their enemies. The book of Jeremiah is built around the idea of judgment and salvation.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his teaching on the book of Jeremiah. This is session six, An Overview of the Book of Jeremiah.