

Reconstructing The Book of Jeremiah

(0:08 - 1:04)

The book of the prophet Jeremiah speaks of a kingdom at its end, a kingdom that has long refused to obey God, who has rejected the words of its prophets, and a people who have refused to listen to the words of its God. Jeremiah would oversee this kingdom to its very end, but he also spoke of a hopeful future. But understanding the world and words of the prophet Jeremiah has proven elusive to Bible students, and that's mainly because the book itself is not arranged chronologically.

Join me as we seek to put the book of Jeremiah in its proper order. Now, in the description there is a link to a guide for this class. Download the link and follow along.

(1:23 - 1:57)

The world and words of the prophet Jeremiah are known to us from several sources. We have the Meseretic text, which is followed by Jews and Protestants primarily. We also have the Greek Septuagint, which is followed by the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox communities, but they differ.

So the Greek, for instance, is about one-eighth shorter than the Meseretic text. Also, the arrangement is different in these books. For instance, we have the Oracles of the Nations.

(1:57 - 4:22)

In the Meseretic text we find these in chapter 46 through 51, but in the Greek Septuagint they appear in chapters 25 through 31. We also have fragments of Jeremiah from the cache of documents that was discovered at Qumran. We have these documents that were discovered in the caves at Qumran.

Sometimes they support the Meseretic text, but at other times they support the reading from the Greek Septuagint. So the student, or the person who's looking into this, doesn't get a lot of help in that regard. But none of these sources represent the original work of Jeremiah.

According to our available records, and here I'll begin to primarily refer to the Meseretic text, we have the original work was written in 605 BCE. In other words, it tells us in the Meseretic text that the original Jeremiah was written during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. It says in Jeremiah 36.1, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord.

Get a scroll and write upon it all the words that I've spoken to you concerning Israel and Judah and all the nations from the time that I first spoke to you in the days of Josiah unto this day. Perhaps when the house of Judah hear of all the disasters I intend to bring upon them, they will turn back from their wicked ways, and I will pardon their iniquity and their sin. So Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah and Baruch wrote down in a scroll at Jeremiah's dictation, all the words which Jehovah had spoken to him.

So this particular passage tells us that at the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah is assigned to write down the past 23 years worth of prophecies. I should add that Jeremiah chapter 45 would plug into this location as we sort things out, we'll make that clear. But

Jeremiah 45 describes an incident that takes place at the time the original scroll is being written.

(4:22 - 7:56)

But that work was destroyed by King Jehoiakim in the winter of 604 BCE. So it was written in 605, it was destroyed in 604. The story of the destruction of that original Jeremiah is also contained in Jeremiah chapter 36.

In fact, I'll go down to Jeremiah 36 and verse 28 because after it was destroyed, Jeremiah is commanded to write another scroll. Verse 28, get yourself another scroll, write upon it the same words that were in the first scroll that was burned by King Jehoiakim of Judah. Now look down at verse 32.

So Jeremiah got another scroll, gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and at Jeremiah's dictation, he wrote in it the whole text of the scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah had burned and more of the like was added. So this tells us that not only is this second scroll, even though it's a replacement for the one that Jehoiakim burned, it tells us that all of that was recorded and then more was added. Now this rewritten text, the rewritten text of the book of Jeremiah went through, obviously, several revisions from that time until the present.

And we have some examples of that. Look at Jeremiah chapter 51. In Jeremiah chapter 51, we have evidence within the text that this is not the completed, in other words, it's revealing it as the stages of its being written were produced.

If you look at verse 64 of Jeremiah 51, and say, thus shall Babylon sink and never rise again because of the disaster that I will bring upon it, and nations shall have wearied themselves for fire. I'm reading from the JPS, thus far the words of Jeremiah. This shows that at some point in the evolution of the text of the book of Jeremiah that this was the end.

But we have another chapter it's tacked on after this particular text. Now there's another clue that the present work, the present book of Jeremiah is not the original, and that is that it is not arranged chronologically. And this, by the way, is not intentional.

It becomes obvious that it just happens to be the way that we have received the text. Now, few have attempted to disentangle the editorial layers of our present book of Jeremiah. I have begun to do this very project, and this particular class represents the fruits of my labors up to this point.

Imagine picking up a book of 52 chapters, and you know you want to read it because it's an author that you really care about. You like to read their work. So you pick up this book, and for the first 23 chapters, there's really only two clues that anchor you to, or orient you to, the characters and the timeline of the story that you really want to read.

(7:56 - 17:11)

And then following that, when you get to chapter 24, you are pulled 30 years forward into the narrative, which is a 40-year story, or a story that covers a period of 40 years. So you're automatically pulled that far into the story. But then the next chapter, as you turn the page, you're pulled back in time eight years.

Now this would begin to be a little bit hard to follow. But let's take my hypothetical book a little bit further. What if I told you that the chapters of this book were arranged as follows? Imagine individual chapters out on a large table, and they are assembled in this way.

One, two, nine, thirteen, four, three, sixteen, seventeen, fourteen, thirty-four, thirty-five, eight, seven, twenty-six, eleven, twenty-eight, thirty-one, five, twenty-seven, and it goes on and on and on. Do you think you would be able to follow the story and really understand, really get the message that the author intended? I doubt you could. This, ladies and gentlemen, is Jeremiah.

Now, go with me to Jeremiah chapter one, Jeremiah chapter one, and let's begin in verse one. The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of the Lord came to him in the days of Josiah, son of Ammon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign, and throughout the days of King Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah, son of Josiah of Judah, when Jerusalem went into exile in the fifth month.

So, at the outset, we are introduced to a forty-year period from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, which is 627 BCE until 586 BCE. Now, the way that we can begin to order things, that we can make some sense out of the confusion which is the present-day arrangement of the chapters of Jeremiah, is to go with what we know. And what we know are the reigns of the kings of Judah, the final kings of Judah.

We know not only the order in which they reign, but we really have a good idea of the years of their reign, and we also have the dates. So, we get a lot of this from Kings and Chronicles and other sources. But let's begin.

So, let's talk through the kings. Now, the timeline that I want you to envision is that Josiah the king, the son of Ammon, assumes the throne at eight years old. Now, we get his story in 2 Kings chapter 22 verse 1 through 23 verse 30.

Also, same story, different source, 2 Chronicles 34 1 through 35 27. Now, Josiah, according to our sources, reigns 31 years from 640 BCE until 609 BCE. That means that with Jeremiah beginning to receive the word of the Lord in the thirteenth year, that they overlap for 19 years, from 627 BCE until 609 BCE, when Josiah is killed in a battle at Megiddo by an arrow from Necho II.

There is one clear reference to the days of Josiah in the book of Jeremiah. It doesn't mean that's all that came through Jeremiah during the reign of Josiah. It simply means there is one clear textual reference to the days of Josiah.

Josiah was replaced in 609 BCE by the people of the land who replaced him with his son Jehoahaz, who is also known as Shalom. We get from the historical sources he is the fourth son of Josiah, and that references 1 Chronicles chapter 3 verse 15, but his reign is covered in Kings and Chronicles. 2 Kings 23 verse 30 through verse 33 and 2 Chronicles 36 verses 1 through 4. He only reigns three months.

Now, one thing that we know from the superscription to the book of Jeremiah is that no word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah during this three-month period. He skipped right over,

if you read Jeremiah 1, 1 through 3. Next in line, and by the way, Jehoahaz, Shalom, is carried away captive by Necho II, and he goes to Egypt, and that's where he dies. He's replaced by the king of Egypt, puts on the throne in the place of Shalom, the second son of Josiah, whose name is Eliakim, and the Egyptian changes his name to Jehoiakim.

2 Kings chapter 23 verse 34 through chapter 24 verse 7, and also 2 Chronicles chapter 36 verse 4 through 8, that covers the period of Jehoiakim. Now, Jehoiakim reigns for 11 years, from 609-608 BCE under 598 BCE. He is then replaced by Jehoiakim, also known as Jeconiah, also known as Konya.

He is a son of Jehoiakim. 1 Chronicles chapter 3 verse 16 gives us that genealogy. Now, his reign, Jehoiakim, Konya, is covered in 2 Kings 24 verse 6 through 17, and 2 Chronicles 36 verses 8 through 10.

He then is replaced by Metaniah, also known as Zedekiah. Zedekiah is listed as the third son of Josiah in 1 Chronicles 3 verse 15. His career brings us to the end of the Judean kingdom.

It begins in 2 Kings chapter 24 verse 17 and runs until the end of the monarchy, the Judean monarchy, but the story is also told in 2 Chronicles 36 beginning in verse 10. It's also covered in Jeremiah chapter 52. Now, additionally, we have other sources to bring in to round out the picture of the final days, the world and words of the prophet Jeremiah.

One of those references is in the book of Zephaniah. In the book of Zephaniah, we have the following, and a lot of people miss this, but in Zephaniah chapter 1 it says, verse 1, the word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah, son of Qushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, during the reign of King Josiah, son of Ammon of Judah. This means that the book of Zephaniah covers the reign of Josiah.

That doesn't give us more specificity as far as dates go, but that means if you read the book of Zephaniah, you've got to plug that in somewhere on a timeline between 640 and 609 BCE. Another reference a lot of people miss is from the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel actually covers part of this period as well.

So, if you look at Daniel chapter 1 beginning in verse 1, it tells us, in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it. The Lord delivered King Jehoiakim of Judah into his power together with some of the vessels of the house of God, and he brought them to the land of Shinar to the house of his God. He deposited the vessels in the treasury of his God.

(17:12 - 23:44)

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief officer, to bring some Israelites of royal descent and of nobility, and it goes on. But we learn, if we keep reading through verse 5, that Daniel was one of those who was brought in this captivity that took place in the third year of Jehoiakim. Ezekiel is another book that fits neatly into a part of this particular story, into the world and words of the prophet Jeremiah, and that's because, if you look with me at Ezekiel chapter 1 and verse 2, it says, on the fifth day of the month, it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiakim, also known as Jeconiah, also known as Konyah.

That's when the word of the Lord begins to come to Ezekiel Ben-Buzi, the priest. So what we find is that if we look at Ezekiel chapter 1 through verse 24, that plugs neatly into our timeline between the last seven years of the Judean monarchy. Here we begin in the fifth year of the exile of Jehoiakim, which is the fifth year of Zedekiah's reign, because Zedekiah follows Jehoiakim.

And if we follow that through, we get to chapter 24, and 24 is very specific. It is the time of the invasion. So we can neatly begin to round out our picture.

So the first step in organizing the material of Jeremiah, considering that we have all of these other sources which shed light on the world in words of Jeremiah the prophet, is we begin to look at them together. We begin to analyze the text, looking for clues that will help us rearrange in chronological order the chapters in our present book of Jeremiah. So the first thing we do is we begin with the rulers.

We know that Josiah is first, and as I pointed out, in the days of Josiah, it's a 19-year period, we have one clear reference, Jeremiah chapter 3, verse 6. Now that doesn't give us a lot of help. You would think that during that 19-year period that we would have more, because it represents nearly half of the final 40 years. Again, it's not to say that there are some of the materials that we have in the book of Jeremiah that aren't clearly designated as the days of Josiah, but I'm going first of all only with what we know.

So I would put Jeremiah chapter 3, verse 6, because it says in the days of Josiah, I'm going to plug that in under Josiah. Next king is Shalom, Yehoahaz. Now as I pointed out in the superscription at the opening of Jeremiah, it says very clearly he skipped.

In other words, the word of the Lord doesn't come to Jeremiah during that three-month period. He simply says from Josiah's day, from the 13th year, then he goes to skip over Shalom, Yehoahaz, and then he gets to the next king, to Yehoahim. But there is a reference to Shalom in chapter 22, verses 10 through 12.

Very clearly this is talking to, not to Shalom or Yehoahaz, but to Yehoahim about his brother. That text would plug in, not under Shalom or Yehoahaz, but it would fall in under Yehoahim. Now I'm going to give you sort of a general, and then we'll get very specific.

And again, the guide that I have in the description is going to help you sort this out from the reigns of the king to the chapters which belong in that particular section becomes very clear, and it will help you order this material and read it in chronological order, allowing the book of Jeremiah and the final days of the Judean kingdom to come to life before your very eyes. So if we look at Yehoahim, 608 to 598 BCE, the following chapters would take place in his reign. Chapter 25, chapter 26, chapter 35, chapter 36, and chapter 45.

Now they're not going to be in that order, as you'll see, but those chapters you could put as I have in the guide under Yehoahim. Next we have Jeconiah, also known as Jehoiakin, also known as Konyah. There's one prophecy, one word of the Lord to Jeremiah about Jeconiah and to Jeconiah, and it comes to us in Jeremiah chapter 22, verse 24 through 30, and that's it.

That is all within the book of Jeremiah that fits into the reign of Jeconiah. But remember, Jeconiah's reign is only three months long, so it's not such a big deal. Now we get to Zedekiah.

Zedekiah is the final king of the Judean kingdom, and the bulk of the book of Jeremiah fits into his reign. Zedekiah reigned from 597 BCE until 586 BCE, 11 years. These are the chapters which fit into the reign of Zedekiah.

(23:45 - 28:42)

We have chapter 24, chapter 27, 28, 29, chapter 32 and 33, chapter 37, 38, and 39, and chapter 46 through 52. All of these chapters fit into the reign of Zedekiah, but they're not arranged chronologically. In other words, even though we have gaps in the numbering that I just read off and that are appearing in the guide that I've attached, they're not in order.

We'll see why. We'll explain that as we work through. Now after Zedekiah is taken away in 586 BCE, Gedalia is appointed governor.

Now we know Gedalia. Gedalia is a member of the family of Shaphan. I taught a class not too long ago on the holy family where we talk about this one particular family that is very much a part of the world in words of Jeremiah.

Shaphan family is mentioned in quite a few contexts, in quite a few chapters and verses. Now the period of time in the book of Jeremiah that fits under Gedalia is chapter 40 and part of chapter 41. Now the story of Gedalia is that he is appointed as the governor of Judea after the Babylonians have sacked the kingdom, taken captivity captive, Gedalia is appointed over the Judeans which remain.

Now we get this very interesting story about how Gedalia is assassinated. We read that a descendant of the royal seed is motivated by the king of Ammon to assassinate him. He's warned by members of his inner circle, but he cannot bear to believe that members of his own people would assassinate him.

But because he didn't believe, he absolutely was murdered. Now this particular story is certainly worth the read if it's been a while, but that appears in chapter 40 and 41 of Jeremiah. The next phase is the period that's described in Jeremiah where a group of people go to Egypt.

That would be chapter 43 and 44 of the current book of Jeremiah. Now the end of the book is very easy to identify. Look, I'll read it to you.

Go with me to Jeremiah chapter 52. This would plug in as the very end of the book. Jeremiah 52 verse 31.

In the 37th year of the exile of King Jehoiakim of Judah, see how far in the future it goes, on the 25th day of the 12th month, King Evil-Meredok of Babylon in the year he became king took note of King Jehoiakim of Judah and released him from prison. He spoke kindly to him, gave him a throne above those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. He removed his prison garments and Jehoiakim ate regularly in his presence the rest of his life.

A regular allotment of food was given him by order of the king of Babylon, an allotment for each day to the day of his death, all the days of his life. So this particular passage puts us well into the future and it's tacked on at the end. Now, adding to the complexity, the chapters are something which come much later in the evolution of the Bible.

So they're not invented at this time. So the arrangement of the material, we can't really go by the chapters as we'll see. So let's begin to work through.

I told you the chapters which belong under a certain monarch, but now we've got to order those because even though we have them listed, they're not in order because the chapters don't necessarily reflect chronology. So I'll give you an example. We'll go with what we know.

Chapter 1 of Jeremiah probably belongs where it is. It's very clear. It's got the superscription that sort of lays out the book.

(28:43 - 29:14)

Chapter 1 also contains the call of Jeremiah. So we would assume that that would go in its proper place. And then we have chapter 3, verse 6, which is a clear reference to Josiah.

Those are the two that I'm willing at this point to, with a good degree of confidence, place under Josiah. And you might be saying, what about chapter 2? Stay with me. Now, the next king on our list is Jehoiakim.

(29:14 - 32:47)

Remember, there's no word of the Lord that comes to Jeremiah during Shalom or Yehoahaz. So the next one we're concerned with is Jehoiakim. Chapter 22, verses 1 through 23, context puts this at the beginning, the very beginning of Jehoiakim's reign.

So, so far, our reconstruction has Jeremiah 1, Jeremiah chapter 3, verse 6, and I would even say the rest of that chapter, but that's getting a little bit iffy. Then I would go to Jehoiakim, and I would place 22, verses 1 through 23, and then we go to the fourth year of Jehoiakim. In other words, the text now brings us, we don't just go there, the text demands us to do this.

So we would then list in this order, chapter 26, chapter 25. Notice 26 is before 25. Context demands that it be like that.

Then we go to chapter 36, verses 1 through 7. Then we go to chapter 45. Now, let me tell you why I broke that way, I broke chapter 36. In other words, if I do this, 36, verses 1 through 7, then I put 45 in there, and then I put 36, verses 8 through 32, let me show you why.

Look at verse chapter 36 of Jeremiah. Remember, this is the account of the writing of the first, the original Jeremiah. So, if you look at chapter 36, the beginning of that, we've already read, it details the writing of the original Jeremiah.

Now, look at verse 7, I'm sorry, verse 8. Baruch, son of Neriah, did just as the prophet Jeremiah had instructed him about reading the words of the Lord from the scroll in the house of the Lord. In the ninth month of the fifth year, see, I switched from the fourth year

to the fifth year. So, I have to separate chapter 36, verse 1 through 7, which is the fourth year, from 36, 8 through 32, which is the fifth year.

Now, why is 45 in the middle? Because if you read 45, you'll see that it took place when Baruch ben Neriah was writing the original scroll. All right, the last chapter in our current arranged book of Jeremiah that belongs under Yehoiakim is chapter 35. It doesn't tell us exactly where to place it, it just says that it's at that time.

Now, you can see in context, it's very clearly in the days of Yehoiakim, so I've placed it at the end. You might place it somewhere else, I'm still working on some of the details here. But let's move to Jeconiah.

Again, Jeconiah, one passage deals with the reign of Jeconiah, and it's Jeremiah chapter 22, verse 24 through 30, not verses 1 through 23. That's another period. Now we go to Zedekiah.

(32:48 - 36:58)

The reign of Zedekiah. It begins, if I look at the texts that are assigned to Zedekiah, the texts which say, this happened in the days of Zedekiah, I now have to break it into what else the text tells me. So, for instance, either the context, or it's very clearly stated, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah.

These are the orders of those passages in order which belong to Zedekiah's reign. Chapter 52, verse 1 through 2. I want to give you a couple of these examples, but you have the chart, you have the guide, so you can look at these on your own. Chapter 52, verse 1 through 2. In my arrangement, I put this at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign.

Why is that? Listen. Verse 1. Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for 11 years. His mother's name was Hamutah, daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

He did what was displeasing to the Lord, just as Jehoiakim had done. Now, immediately after that, it begins to get into the escalation, but it quickly brings us to the ninth year. So, I'm going to put the overview of Zedekiah at the beginning of his reign, just like it does in Kings and Chronicles.

That's my reasoning. Now, let me show you what's next. Chapter 37, verses 1 through 4. Why would I put 37, verses 1 through 4, at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign? Look at verse 1, chapter 37.

Zedekiah, son of Josiah, became king instead of Konyah, son of Jehoiakim. For Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon set him up as king over the land of Judah. Neither he, nor his courtiers, nor the people of the land, gave heed to the words of which the Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

Then it goes on. Yet King Zedekiah sent Yehuchal, son of Shalemiah. I'm going through.

If you read through verse 4, what you'll see is that this would apply to the beginning of his reign. But look when I get to verse 5. The army of Pharaoh set out from Egypt, and when the Chaldeans were besieging Jerusalem. Now, wait a minute.

I'm already in the ninth year in verse 5. So, you see, I've only placed chapter 37, 1 through 4, at the beginning of his reign. Now, look at the guide. Chapter 34, 8 through 22 would fall next.

Then chapter 24. Then chapter 29. Why 29? We're still in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, but it says in 29 that at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, after Jeconiah is taken captive into Babylon, Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles right after that exile.

So, it's going to be falling out at the beginning. Then I place 27 and 28. Chapters 27 and 28 are clearly at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah.

You'll recall that in these particular passages, it's describing a league of nations who have assembled in Jerusalem to talk about the Babylonian problem. So, it's at this point where Jeremiah gives messages to the nations. Remember, he goes into the meeting.

He's got a yoke on his back. Not only that, but he sends messages to the kings of those nations. And therefore, I put chapters 46, 47, 48, 49, the messages to the nations at this point.

(36:59 - 40:02)

Now, the next thing that I put under Zedekiah, chapters 50 and 51. Now, why would I put it in the reign of Zedekiah, first of all, and after the beginning, why would I place it here? Because chapters 50 and 51 contain a message concerning Babylon, an oracle, if you will, concerning Babylon. I want you to look with me at Jeremiah chapter 51, and I'll show you my reasoning.

Verse 59, Jeremiah 51 and verse 59. The instructions that the prophet Jeremiah gave to Sariah, son of Nereah, son of Machzeah, when the latter went with king Zedekiah, so you know I'm in the right king at least, of Judah to Babylonia in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. So it's not the beginning, but it's the fourth year.

Remember, Zedekiah reigns 11 years. So this is the one reference to the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. And the next thing that we get in the current book of Jeremiah, we have several references to the ninth year of Zedekiah.

And I'm in the guide, but I am going to give you the references. So the following plug-in in this order in the book of Jeremiah, if you're going to arrange things chronologically, all of this fits under the ninth year of Zedekiah. Jeremiah 39 verse 1. Chapter 52 verses 3 and 4. Chapter 37 verse 5 through 9. Chapter 38 verses 1 through 5. Chapter 37 verses 10 through 16.

Chapter 38 verses 6 through 13. Chapter 37 verses 17 through 21. Chapter 38 verses 14 through 27.

And chapter 39 verses 15 through 18. And then we get to the 10th year, and we have references in the text. By the way, all of those texts tell us this is in the ninth year, but look at how the order is arranged.

Now, if we go to the 10th year, we have clear references that the following fit into the 10th year. Chapter 32 and 33. Chapter 34 verses 1 through 7. And you say, why only 1 through 7? Because chapter 34 verses 8 through 22 belong in another passage under another period.

(40:03 - 45:52)

And then we get to the 11th year of Zedekiah. In the 11th year of Zedekiah, we have chapter 39 verses 2 through 7, and that's the same, basically the same as the account given in chapter 52 verses 5 through 11. We also have, next in the 11th year, chapter 39 verses 8 through 14 is equal to the same but a different source, chapter 52 verses 12 through 30.

Then we get to Gedalia. Under Gedalia, I would put chapter 40 in verse 1 through chapter 41 in verse 2. And then after his death, I would plug in chapter 41 verse 3 until the end of 43 verse 3. You see how complex this is? That covers me up to the point where the people decide and begin to move to Egypt. So the Egypt section would be chapter 43 verse 4 through the end of chapter 44.

And then, of course, the end note which we read earlier, chapter 52 verse 31 through 34. Now, I know that's a lot, but it's why we produce the visual aids. It's why we put together this document because it takes and it begins to help us to put things in the right order.

Now, this is what we know with a very good degree of certainty up to this point. Now, the work begins. All of that was easy.

Now, the work begins. Now, we're going to hit a couple of points to show you what we have to do from this point forward. Up to this point, everything which I've told you can be backed up very clearly.

You can see, number one, that I'm right, that it is totally out of order. Number two, that it's not difficult to put it back into the order when the text gives us the clear indication of whose reign and what part of their reign. That's easy.

Now, we have to get busy. Now, we have to attempt to place the following unassigned chapters into our new and improved book of Jeremiah, and all we have are cues from the text. We're done with going through and picking out that it was in the beginning of this king's reign or the fourth year.

We don't have that much help anymore. Now, there's a couple of ways to do this. I could take what's left, the remaining books, and put them at the end and simply say, these are some various prophecies or narratives or poems or however you want to put it that took place in the days of Jeremiah, in the world and words of Jeremiah, but they're unassigned to date.

Now, I want you to think about this. When you look at this, look how weighted it is. In other words, after you get about the first half of the book, we don't really know where it goes.

So, in some ways, you know, as I think about it, maybe an ancient editor, an ancient assembler did exactly what I'm talking about doing. Rather than put it at the end, which I probably would, he says or she says, whatever the case may be, I'll put them at the beginning. So, quite possibly, that's one way to do this.

Another way to do it is to arrange things based on these cues and make some speculative guesses. I'll give you a couple of examples, but let me first tell you what's left on the table. We've already assigned everything that we can know.

We still have chapter 2, chapter 4 through 21. Look at that. All of those right at the beginning.

Chapter 23 and two of my favorite chapters in all of biblical literature, chapter 30 and 31 of Jeremiah. Let's start with chapter 2. I'm inclined to put this into the reign of Jehoiakim, not Josiah. That's interesting.

It's plugged in between chapter 1 and chapter 3, known to be associated with Josiah. Now, why would I put it in the time of Jehoiakim? For this reason, if you read verse 18 and verse 36, it talks about leaning on Egypt. We know that that's really taking place in the reign of Jehoiakim.

Now, you might not go with that, but what about this? If you read verse 30, look at this. Let me just show you. Let's look at this together.

Jeremiah. I won't hold your hand through the whole thing, but let's look at this. Jeremiah chapter 2 and verse 30.

To no purpose did I smite your children. They would not accept correction. Your sword has devoured your prophets like a ravaging lion.

(45:54 - 46:06)

A sword devouring prophets. Now, you might think that that's just a general statement. For instance, Nehemiah chapter 9 verse 26 says similarly, but think about this.

(46:07 - 46:56)

Jehoiakim actually does kill a prophet with a sword in chapter 26 and verse 23. So, I think that actually this is an illusion. This is a textual cue that says, put me in Jehoiakim's reign, and I think that's where it goes.

Now, let's talk about Jeremiah chapter 30 and 31. Jeremiah's new covenant scroll. I've gone back and forth on this one, trying to place it, you know, where exactly does it go? In chapter 30, we're told, write this scroll, and the scroll, the content of the scroll clearly goes from chapter 30 and verse 1 through the end of chapter 31.

(46:56 - 47:45)

I've called this Jeremiah's new covenant scroll. It seems to be a separate scroll. I've placed it in times past in my thinking, all the way back into Jehoiakim's reign, you know, but I'm now rethinking that, and I tell you what, I'm now inclined to push this to the very end.

Other people have proposed this, mainly because it's so forward-looking. I think they're right, and let me tell you why. I have a clue now.

This really hit me the other day. I'm inclined to put 30 and 31 right around 586 BCE. I'm going to take you there right now.

(47:46 - 48:43)

Read with me. Let's go to Jeremiah chapter 40. Jeremiah chapter 40, verse 1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuchadnezzar and the chief of the guards set him free at Ramah, to which he had taken him chained in fetters among those from Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

Now think about this. This, by the way, chapter 40 comes after the Babylonians have totally ruined Jerusalem, and they've gathered up the exiles, or they're exiling all of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They bring them north of the city to Ramah, and there among the exiles a chained Jeremiah set.

(48:45 - 50:15)

In my mind's eye, I can see weeping mothers, people downtrodden. Read the book of Lamentations. You'll see it too.

They're walking with their bags on their shoulders, and it says the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah at Ramah. Now I want you to think about this. You realize, first of all, that there is no word of the Lord here.

It just tells us that the word of the Lord came, but it doesn't tell us what the word of the Lord was. But I think I found it. Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 15.

Thus says the Lord, a cries heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children. Literally in the Hebrew, her son is not.

Jeremiah looks around. He's at Ramah. He's talking about Rachel weeping, but Rachel's tomb is not at Ramah.

It's not like he's, you know, it wouldn't make sense if he's sitting by the tomb of Rachel, but the tomb of Rachel's at Bethlehem. He's still in the spirit, you might say. He hears Rachel weeping.

(50:16 - 50:46)

He hears sobbing, but above the sobs, above the tears of Rachel, perhaps it's here that he thinks of the verse that will later become part of his new covenant scroll. Now look at Jeremiah 31, verse 16. Thus says the Lord, refrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears.

(50:47 - 51:01)

There's a reward for your labor, declares the Lord. They shall return from the enemy's land, and there is hope for your future, declares the Lord. Your children shall return to their country.

(51:04 - 51:23)

Just like the story of Rachel's son Joseph, who was not. Yet Joseph lives. There truly is hope for the future.