

A STUDY GUIDE

for

THE

BROTHERHOOD OF THE

SCROLL

By

DAVID L. LANTZ

A STUDY GUIDE
For
THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SCROLL

Copyright © 2005 David Lantz
Indianapolis, IN

All rights reserved, including translation.
Except for brief quotations in reviews or critical
Articles, no part of this book may be reproduced,
stored or transmitted by any electronic or
mechanical means without prior written
approval of the publisher.

What follows are the introduction, historical overview and First Lesson from *A Study Guide for The Brotherhood of the Scroll*. The entire study guide can be ordered from David Lantz at dlantz@buyingtechnology.com. Cost is \$5.00 US.

Part I Introduction

Several years ago, I wrote my novel, **The Brotherhood of the Scroll**, following the broad historic outline of the events which happened during the time period covered by the Book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. Like any work of fiction, many of the characters, what they do and say, and the events which occur in the novel, are things I imagined and put to paper. Yet, much of what does occur is based on actual events recorded in Scripture. From the beginning, one of my prayers for the novel was that as people read it, they would be driven back to the Bible – particularly the Old Testament – to see which events described really happened, as opposed to being fictional.

Not long ago, my son Jason – who is 22 – suggested I write a study guide aimed at teens and young adults. In our conversations, we agreed that such a study guide be designed to address the following three objectives;

1. How is the Old Testament relevant to Christ's teachings?
2. How can a bunch of stories about people and places I know nothing about be relevant to my life?
3. What spiritual and moral lessons can I learn from reading this novel and understanding the historical and biblical background upon which it is based?

The study guide is not designed to be an exhaustive study of the books of II Kings, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel. From a scriptural reference source, it barely skims the surface. However, for the person who wants to know “Where do I find the stuff the author is talking about in the Bible,” it will provide a start.

Part II of this study guide provides a brief historical background of the period covered in the novel. Included here is a list of the kings of Judah who reigned during the ministry of Jeremiah, as well as a timeline of events.

The heart of the study guide is Part III, in which there are nine lessons – one lesson for each set of chapters associated with a “Chronicles of Belteshazzar.” These nine lessons are:

1. Speaking Out for What is Right
2. God’s Plan for Your Life
3. God Wants Us to Live a Moral Life
4. Willingly Paying the Cost to Serve Others
5. Do You Place Your Faith in God, or Man?
6. Why Tolerance is Wrong if it Means Compromising Your Faith
7. To Pray or Not To Pray – That is the Question
8. The Power of Your Personal Testimony
9. Turning Over Control of Your Life to Christ

One final piece of structure is provided for each lesson. Each Lesson Chapter will have the following seven sections:

1. The Historical Context
2. What Was The Author Thinking?
3. Key Lesson
4. Novel Excerpt
5. Scripture reference
6. Discussion questions
7. Call to action

This study guide is designed for use either as an individual study guide or to aid in facilitating group discussion. I have attempted to provide the various scripture references I consulted in developing the novel. So, for the person who asks “Where is *this* in the Bible?” he or she will be able to find the answer. For those who wish to facilitate group discussion, the questions I have posed are designed to apply to people living in a Postmodern America. Though not designed exclusively for a high school/young adult audience, the reader will find that many of the questions have these two age groups in mind.

II The Legacy of Judah's Kings

For me, it is helpful to use modern history as a way to see ancient history. If we think of what was going on during the “Cold War” of the 20th century, and the powers that made up the two opposing sides, I think it helps to view the events of the 6th century B.C.

So, for the sake of my analogy, consider this following list:

Ancient World Power

1. Assyria (on the decline)
2. Egypt (Aging dominant superpower)
3. Babylon (New, rising power)

Modern World Power

- Russia (Formerly the Soviet Union)
United States (Aging dominant superpower)
China (New, rising power)

To be sure, we are not at war with China in a military sense – though we are in a sense experiencing an economic war, as the Chinese economy emerges and competes with the US. But, like Babylon rose after the fall of the Assyrian empire, China is rising now that the old Soviet Union has collapsed.

Judah was on a main trade route known as “The Way of the Sea.” It was for this reason that the great powers fought over control of that area. Along with places like Ashkelon, Ammon, and Moab, these nations were what we would today call “buffer states.” Just as the U.S.S.R. used the Eastern European nations following WWII as buffer states against an invasion by the Western NATO alliance in the late Twentieth Century, so Judah and these other ancient nations were used as buffer states by their larger, more powerful neighbors.

Jeremiah Prophesied for forty years, spanning the reign of a several kings. Here is the list – you can read about them in II Kings 22-25:

Josiah:	641-609 B.C.
Johoahaz	609 (3 months)
Jehoiakim	609-598 B.C.
Johoiachin	598-597 (3 months)
Zedekiah	597-586 B.C.

Prior to Jeremiah's being called as a prophet, Judah's kings adopted a more “modern” religion - the religion of the Canaanites. They turned to worshiping the Baals and Ashorah. This

involved the practice of Temple prostitution. They also adopted the Assyrian practice of child sacrifice. In Jeremiah 7:31-34, the prophet talks about how the city of Jerusalem built the Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom. By Jesus' day, the name had become Gehenna, from which we derive the word Hell. (See for example, Math. 5:22). The religious practice made sense to the local population – and because it was practiced by the descendants of the Philistines and Phoenicians (people who more technologically advanced than the Hebrews) it was viewed as the more “sophisticated” way to practice religion. It was the equivalent of today's 3rd world countries being corrupted by “modern” western culture.

This practice actually went back to the time of a king named Manasseh, who ruled Judah from 695-642. He made children go through the fire (II Kings 21:6). Following Manasseh, his son Amon ruled Judah for 22 years until his death in 641 B.C. He did the same evil things his father did – you can read about him in II Kings 21:19-26. But then came a king by the name of Josiah.

Under Josiah, Judah experienced revival and a turning back to the Lord. The book of the Law, written by Moses, was found in the 18th year of his reign (II Kings 22:8-13). As a result, he ordered that all the idols be removed from the temple, and indeed throughout the land. It is important to understand that Jeremiah began his ministry as a young man during the reign of Josiah – in fact, in the 13th year of Josiah's reign. That means that for about five years, Jeremiah had been calling on Judah to repent (see Jeremiah 4:1-4).

And then, one day, they found the Book of the Law of Moses while doing some remodeling of the temple. Josiah the king says “I get it – we will repent!” Imagine being in Jeremiah's shoes. Finally, the political powers-that-be are doing as Jeremiah had said. Jeremiah's stock as a prophet to be listened to is rising – he is respected.

But then, in 609 B.C., Josiah died in battle against the Egyptians at Megiddo. Eventually, Jehoiakim, one of the sons of Josiah, became king. The evil practices that Jeremiah had preached against returned. To his horror, Jeremiah discovered that the reforms under Josiah had only been skin deep. In Jeremiah 5:30-31, we read: “An appalling and horrible thing has

happened in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority, and My people love it so!”

I hope this brief overview of the events surrounding the time period of the novel has helped you get a feel for what was going on. It may help to see a timeline of events to which the study leader and/or group can refer for additional details.

Timeline of Events in the Book of Jeremiah							
639	626	621	612	609	605	601	597
Josiah is King in Judah at age 8	Ashurbanipal dies, Jeremiah becomes a prophet, & Nabopolassar becomes king	Book of the Law is found, religious reforms begun under King Josiah	Ninevah is sacked by Babylon, Assyrian empire ends.	Josiah dies at Megiddo, 1st Jehozaz, and then Jehoiakim become king in Judah	Jeremiah issues prophecy (Ch. 25), Babylon defeats Egypt at Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar takes 1st of 3 exile groups	Egypt defeats Babylon at Migdol, Jehoiakim sides with Egypt.	Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem, Jehoiakim dies, 1st Jehoiachin, and then Zedekiah become king in Judah, 2nd exile group to Babylon.
		593	592-588	588	586	585	
		Nebuchadnezzar must put down uprising in Babylon	Judah enters into alliance with league of small states, led by Egypt	Babylon begins two year siege of Jerusalem	Egypt aborts attempt to aide Judah, Jerusalem burned, Zedekiah killed	Gedaliah made Governor of Judah, is assassinated, Jeremiah carried off to Egypt.	

One final point to make concerns the message of the book. In Jeremiah 7:3-6, the prophet lists six sins committed by Judah for which God will hold His people accountable. If the people repent, God will spare his people. Those sins were:

1. Trusting in deceptive words.
2. Failure to amend the people’s ways.
3. Failure to practice justice between a man and his neighbor.
4. Oppressing the alien, the widow and the orphan.
5. The shedding of innocent blood.
6. Walking after false idols.

Because of the legacy of Judah's leaders, the message of Jeremiah is this:

First, God will not forever withhold his judgment (Jeremiah 7:23-24 and 8:11-12)

Second, because the leaders, priests and prophets hold the key to God's word, and fail to properly instruct the people, there will come a day when God will write his laws on the hearts of men. All men will know God. This is the New Covenant of Chapter thirty-one, especially verses 33-34. God's people will no longer need to rely on teachers who lead them astray.

Third, the new covenant is given to us by Christ's dying on a cross for us. It is a covenant not written on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of our hearts (II Corinthians 3:3).

III Lessons

Lesson 1: Chapters 1-3

In the third year of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, the Lord God raised up a Lion from the east, one Nebuchadnezzar. In that same year, King Nebuchadnezzar led Babylon at a place called Carchemish, and there defeated the Egyptians. Though he did so in the name of his god, Marduk, the king of the Babylonian gods, the God of the Hebrews had in fact ordained his steps. Nebuchadnezzar's comings and goings were prophesied by the Voice of the Lord, Jeremiah of Anathoth. Here begins the account of how the God of the Universe caused the Children of Israel to go in exile to the land of the Chaldeans.

The Chronicles of Belteshazzar

The Historical Context

In 605 B.C., during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah gave a sermon in the temple (Jeremiah 25:1-3). In vs. 3, we read that Jeremiah had been prophesying for 23 years. That would have made him in his early forties, since in Jeremiah was a youth when he began his ministry (Jeremiah 1:7). Note that in his sermon, Jeremiah prophesied these things would come to pass, including the fact that the temple would be destroyed and the people carried into captivity for 70 years.

Nebuchadnezzar threatened destruction of Jerusalem in 604 B.C. Jehoiakim surrendered, and agreed to pay tribute to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar took some captive to Babylon, including Daniel. Daniel was a teenager, and would likely have not only known Jeremiah, but may also have been a disciple of his. You can read about what was happening with Daniel in Daniel Chapter One. Note the Daniel passage refers to the 3rd year of Jehoiakim. This is because the Babylonians and the Hebrews had a different way of counting the year in which the king claimed the throne as the "1st" year.

Also in 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt at Carchemish. This was a city on the Euphrates River north of Jerusalem. Not long after the battle at Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar received word that his father, Nabopolassar, had died. Instead of chasing the Egyptians, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon and was made king.

One other key fact is that while all this was going on in Jerusalem and Babylon, Pharaoh Necho of Egypt “conceived the notion of canalizing the Wady Tumilat by cutting a waterway, the ‘Canal of the East,’ probably from the Kharom Lake midway along its length to the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez ...the intent of this ambitious operation was to be able to operate freely on both Nile and Red Sea, and possibly open up alternative avenues of attack on Mesopotamia.” (Source: Redford, Donald B.: Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times, Princeton University Press, 1992 pp. 451-2).

What Was The Author Thinking

The time period 605-604 B.C. is a critically important one. In terms of military events, Egypt and Babylon – the two world superpowers of the day – fought a major battle at Carchemish. Then, Nabopolassar king of Babylon died, and Nebuchadnezzar his son was summoned back to Babylon. This prevented him from following and crushing the Egyptians following the battle. Finally, Jeremiah went to the Temple in Jerusalem at about the same time as the battle to deliver a sermon about the coming exile of the Jews to Babylon.

The only thing I needed was an event or project that would have military/political consequences – that would potentially upset the balance of power between the two superpowers. I thought about a canal – and then, I stumbled across a book that actually indicated that such a canal had existed. (See **Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times** by Donald Redford) I’ve since done more research on the subject. If you’re interested in learning more about this topic, check out the following site: <http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/timelines/topics/canals.htm>.

Like a novel by Tom Clancy set in Bible times, the geopolitical ramifications of such a project would provide a focal point around which all other events would revolve. Including the canal project also helps give some context as to the economic conditions of the day and why Judah might enter into an agreement with Tyre and other nations: The desire to reap economic profits from the increase in trade they might hope to generate.

One issue with which I had to wrestle was how to bridge the time gaps occurring in the novel. The actual events covered span nearly two decades. Therefore, I needed a way to take the reader from one time period to the next without loss of continuity. For this device, I

developed the fictitious “Chronicles of Belteshazzar.” As the reader will see, Belteshazzar was the Babylonian name given to Daniel by King Nebuchadnezzar. These chronicles are completely fictitious. Nothing like them, so far as I am aware, actually exists.

Finally, I should note that the description of the Temple is based on reports of what the Temple of Herod looked like at the time of Christ. This is not a description of the temple Solomon built.

Key Lesson: Speaking Out for What is Right

Often times, people ask us to do something we know is wrong. Have you ever noticed that it usually happens when people are in a group? No one wants to speak out for fear of looking stupid. Yet, more often than not, there are those who are waiting for someone to take a stand, to say “No!” but they’re too afraid to do it themselves. They need someone else to speak up whom they can follow. They need you to speak up.

As you read through the novel, look for situations where someone speaks up. I’ve chosen the following example from the first chapter:

Excerpt from Chapter One

A steady flow of pilgrims made its way toward the Gate of Benjamin, the northern gateway to the Temple of Solomon. Unnoticed among the throng of people, Baruch said to his companion, “It is not too late, we can still turn back.”

“I told you before, the Lord has called me to speak out. Now is the time. This is the place. You don’t have to come with me if you don’t want to.” Jeremiah’s gaze did not lift from the dusty ground in front of him as they proceeded.

“I won’t abandon you. I just don’t want to see you end up like Uriah,” Baruch replied.

A tear escaped Jeremiah’s eye and trickled down his wrinkled sun-scorched face before being captured in the tangle of his beard. With his head bowed to hide his sadness, thoughts of his old friend, Uriah, flashed through Jeremiah’s mind. From the start of Jehoiakim’s reign in Jerusalem, they had both spoken out against the atrocities committed by this king - a man long suspected of

having conspired with the Egyptians to gain the throne of his late father, King Josiah. Since ascending to the throne three years ago, Jehoiakim had prostituted the faith, and sold Israel's soul in exchange for Egyptian riches. Uriah, older and more brash than Jeremiah, had gone into the Valley of Ben-Hinnom during the first year of Jehoiakim's reign to deliver a withering proclamation against the king as he sacrificed to Dagon. Uriah had spoken out for all to hear his words at the foot of the Topheth, their idol.

And for that, Uriah had paid with his life. Never had any prophet been killed by the political powers of Israel. But Uriah had. Indeed, Uriah had learned of Jehoiakim's plan to take his life and had fled to Egypt, but the king used his ties to Pharaoh to have Uriah taken prisoner and brought back to Jerusalem for execution. And Pashur, the First Keeper of the Door, had not said a word! So blinded by the profits from trade with the Egyptians were Jehoiakim and the Temple Priests that they would do everything to safeguard their position, including murder.

Now Jeremiah was about to follow in Uriah's footsteps. Would the Lord protect him as he went forward to proclaim the Word that the Voice of the Lord compelled him to utter? He said a silent prayer, ignoring the urge to turn and retrace his steps back across the viaduct over which he had just traversed. He looked at his friend and faithful servant, Baruch, who at forty-two, was two years his senior. Baruch had willingly followed him since their boyhood days growing up in Anathoth. It had been Baruch's plan that Jeremiah's young teenage disciples, Daniel and Ezekiel, accompany them on this day. "If you insist on going to the temple on this suicide mission, at least allow us to provide a plan of escape for you, God willing," he had said. As usual, Jeremiah left those concerns to Baruch. When the Lord prompted him to action, his only thoughts were the accomplishment of the task at hand.

Scripture References:

I believe the Bible is full of examples where someone speaks out, even at risk of their very lives. You'll find the story above in Jeremiah 25. Daniel did so in Daniel 1:8-16; Queen Esther certainly comes to mind in Esther 4:13-17. One last example is Paul as he traveled and preached the Gospel (see Acts 25 to read of one experience where he evaded a group who wanted to kill him). The key is that the Bible is a perfect combination of God's teachings illustrated with the lives of real people through the stories we find there.

Sprinkled throughout these first three chapters are several "Bible trivia" tidbits. To read about how the the Rechabites didn't drink wine, see Jeremiah 35:6. To learn about the Battle of

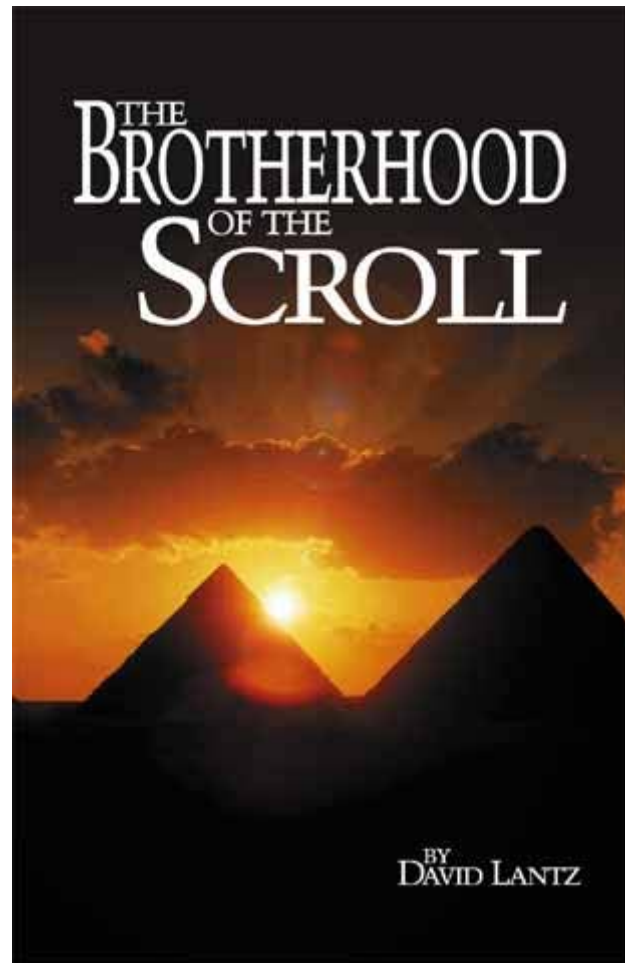
Carchemish, see Jeremiah 46:2, 25-26. And, to learn about how the first scroll of Jeremiah was read to Jehoiakim and then burned, read Jeremiah 36:1-26.

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you think of a story where either you or someone you respect stood up and spoke out for what is right? What difference did you or that person make by speaking up?
2. Can you think of an instance where no one spoke up, and then later on you or someone else felt guilty for what happened? Would things have been different if you or someone had spoken up?
3. How is a person's character changed when they step out and take a risk to speak up for what is right?
4. If you're a young person, ask your parents or an older adult to share stories from their life. Ask them these questions.

Call to Action:

Think about something you participate in, a group you belong to, a club you're a member of. Pray about making a commitment to stand for righteousness. Remember, if you think there's a problem with doing something, chances are very good there are others who feel the same way. The thing is, they're just waiting for someone like you to speak up before they take action. Who knows, but perhaps God is calling you to speak out for righteousness sake at such a time as this.



David Lantz is the author of *The Brotherhood of the Scroll*. For information about his book, including how to order *Brotherhood*, please visit us on the web at www.wisejargon.com