

## **Guardians of the Gospel**

### **Chapter 1 – “An Answered Prayer”**

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The day of wrath has ended. Seven years of chaos under the bloody reign of Antichrist has been brought to a deadly end by the return of the True King. Jesus Christ has gloriously returned to rescue His people from total annihilation, just as He had promised. The Jewish and Gentile survivors, bruised, wounded, hungry, and scared are coming out of hiding. They are being cared for by the angels and the resurrected saints that returned with Christ.

We saw in the last episode of "The Great Rescue" that the angels attended and healed the wounded warriors of the IDF, Preacher (Pete Jenners), Sarge, Boomer, Kling and Hurt who had been defending the remnant of Israel hiding out in Bozrah. Pete, even though he grew up in a Christian home where his dad was a church pastor, did not accept Christ as Savior until after the rapture of the church.

In this new series, "Guardians of the Gospel," we will witness life in the kingdom and how it relates to life today. In this first episode, confused Pete Jenners, (Preacher) a tribulation survivor and warrior still in his earthly body, is interacting with his resurrected father, Pastor Jenners. The citizens of the new kingdom are learning how to live, worship, and serve. Corporal Pete Jenners, and his family are transitioning from war and survival mode to peace and service in Christ's Kingdom. The thousand-year earthly reign of King Jesus has begun.

"Pete, great news!" blurted out Pastor Jenners excitedly as he stormed into his son's home unannounced.

"What is it, Dad? Is the doorbell broken?" asked Pete sarcastically.

Pastor Jenners, puzzled, looking back at the door suddenly realized the sarcasm in Pete's question. "Sorry about the intrusion, Son, but this could not wait. I can't hold this any longer."

After a significant pause, Pete summoned, "Well, are you going to tell me, or do I start guessing?"

Pastor Jenners, as if in deep thought as to how to start was brought back to reality by Pete's question. He struggled to find the right words then blurted out, "Uh, uh, your prayer was answered, Pete."

"What prayer?" asked Pete. "All of my prayers have been answered? You need to be more specific."

Dad, with the excitement of a kid who knows the answer that no one else knows, argued, "Come on, Pete! You've got to remember the prayer you prayed in my office when you were ten years old. I remember it like it was yesterday."

Pete remembered the prayer and the exact time in Houston that his dad was talking about. But his dad was so excited, and Pete wanted to hear his dad tell the story, so he replied, "Sounds vaguely familiar. Can you give me a hint?"

"Guardians of the Gospel!" shouted Dad as if he were announcing the grand opening of a new movie.

"Sounds like a good movie title," replied Pete with a big grin on his face.

"You messing with me, boy?" said dad as if he were talking to a smarted mouth ten-year-old again.

"Sure, Dad. I remember 'Guardians of the Gospel.' It was my idea that I never got credit for."

These words took Pete back to before the Rapture, back to the day he was ten, playing preacher in his dad's church office.

*2004, Houston, Texas*

Ten-year-old Pete, playing preacher behind his dad's desk, was imitating his dad's dynamic preaching voice, "Now turn with me in your Bible! You do have your Bible, don't you? You can't go into battle without your sword!"

Pete's preaching, however, was cut short as he heard his dad coming down the hall with several of the church deacons. It was too late to escape the room, so Pete ducked under his dad's big desk just as the men entered the office. They seemed to be arguing about something.

Pastor Jenners, speaking to the men asked, "What are you saying? You want me to leave the church?"

Pete's ears perked up.

"Now don't go getting all riled up, Pastor," replied Deacon Arnold. "We don't want you to leave, we just want you to tone down your messages a bit. Constantly preaching Jesus by faith alone as the only way to God is offensive to many in our community. Some of our Muslim neighbors are beginning to talk bad about our church."

"Yea, that's right," chimed in Deacon Earle. "We already know about Jesus. We want you to preach some sermons that make the folks feel good about themselves, like the preacher over at Downtown Church."

Deacon Randall added, "They pack the house every Sunday at Downtown Church. You know that some of our folks have been visiting down there, and they like it."

Pastor Jenners, responding quietly and respectfully, said, "OK, let me see if I understand. You don't want me to leave?"

In unison the deacons responded, "That's right, Pastor."

Pastor Jenners continued, "You want more sermons that make the folks feel good about themselves, like the fellow at Downtown Church preaches?"

In unison again the deacons responded, "That's right, Pastor."

Pastor Jenners concluded, "And you want me to preach a toned-down gospel without too much emphasis on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? You believe that this will draw bigger crowds to our church?"

In unison again the deacons heartily responded, "That's right, Pastor. That's right."

Deacon Arnold, turning to Deacons Randall and Earle, said, "See, I told you he would listen to reason."

Before they could finish putting the smiles on their faces, Pastor Jenners, switching to his preaching voice, began quoting Jesus when he spoke to the religious leaders, "You men are of your father the devil." He continued, "There is no way in this lifetime that I am going to tone down, change or distort in any way the gospel message of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father but by me!' There is no other name given under heaven whereby one can be saved!"

Pointing his long, boney finger toward each one individually as he spoke, Pastor Jenners preached, putting drawn-out emphasis on the prepositions, "Salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone! And as long as I can breathe and speak, I will stand guard for the truth of this gospel. Now get the hell out of my office before I really get riled."

The men left the office with their tails tucked between their legs. Pastor Jenners, following them to the door, slammed it behind them. The slamming of the door made young Pete, who was hiding under the desk, jump bumping his head with a thud and a loud "ouch."

Pastor Jenners moved quickly behind his desk to discover young Pete under his desk rubbing his bumped head and looking sheepishly up at his dad.

Pastor Jenners wanted to be angry with Pete, but he was too exhausted and too saddened that his young son had to hear such a heated discourse from church leaders. He plopped down in his desk chair and picked Pete up off the floor and held him tight. They both had tears in their eyes, Dad who was feeling protective of his son and Pete mainly because of the bump on the head.

Pete, breaking away for his father's grip, looked up at him and asked, "You're not gonna let those men run you off are you, Dad?"

Somewhat startled at such a direct question from his son, Pastor Jenners reassuringly said, "No way!"

To which Pete replied, "So, you are going to be a guardian of the gospel?"

"A what?" his dad asked.

"A guardian of the gospel. Just like you told those men that you would stand guard for the gospel," answered Pete.

Pastor Jenners was a little surprised that Pete was remembering what he had said to the deacons. "That's right, son. I guess I am a guardian of the gospel."

Pete explained, "Yea, just like Quill and Rocket and Groot and ..."

"Who?" his dad interrupted.

"You know, the Guardians of the Galaxy, who fought to protect the galaxy from the evil villain. 'I am Groot,'" said Pete, imitating the movie character. "We will be the Guardians of the Gospel to protect the gospel from evil deacons. I am Pete," Pete proclaimed as if creating a new movie character.

"Hold on just a minute, Pete. We're not talking about a movie here. This is real life. This is about Jesus," explained his father.

"Yea, Dad, I know. And I want to be a guardian of the gospel like you, Dad. I want to be on your team."

"Well, Son, you better ask God about that. He's the one that picks the team."

Pete immediately bowed his head and closed his eyes and prayed, "God make me a guardian of the gospel like my dad. Amen."

There could not have been a prouder dad on the planet at that very moment in time.

### *Back in the Kingdom*

"So what does a prayer I made when I was ten have to do with life here in the kingdom?" asked Pete.

"That's what I came here to tell you," answered Dad. "Jesus told me He heard your prayer then and also when you, Sarah, and Jenny put your faith and trust in Him when you went back home after the rapture. You made a gallant effort to preach the gospel to the others who had been left behind in Houston. Jesus also told me He liked your idea 'Guardians of the Gospel,' and He wants to use it here in the Kingdom. He has answered that prayer that you prayed in my office. You and I have been chosen by Jesus to be on the 'Guardians of the Gospel' team together."

"But, Dad," argued Pete, "we're in the Kingdom now, living with Jesus as our King and Lord. There's no need for guardians of the gospel now. It's too late. We live with the gospel. Everyone is a true believer, aren't they?"

His father answered quickly, "Yes, Pete, all are believers now, but it won't be that way for long."

"Now I'm really confused," said Pete as he fell back onto the couch with hands raised, as if to say, "I surrender."

Dad, sitting down on the chair directly in front of Pete, said, "I'm sorry that I have confused you, Son. I just got carried away in my excitement. Let me explain, and this will all make sense to you."

Dad continued, "First of all, as you already know, there are different kinds of citizens in the kingdom. There are resurrected saints like the patriarchs and the faithful from the times before Christ's first coming. And there are resurrected saints like your mom, your sister, and myself from the times of the church age. There are even resurrected saints from those who were martyred during the time of the great tribulation that you, Sarah and Jenny just came through. When Jesus raised us or, as in my case, raptured us, He gave us new glorified bodies. As you have already witnessed, these bodies are not bound by gravity or depravity. In other words, we no longer are bound to this earth by the pull of gravity, and we are no longer bound to sin by the lure of our sinful natures that we all inherited from Adam. Both have been done away with. Jesus promised that our bodies would be fashioned like his glorious body."

Pete sat in silence, listening to every word, every syllable, trying to comprehend all his dad was saying.

Dad, looking directly at Pete, asked, "Who would the other citizens of the kingdom be?"

Pete, unsure of anything right now, hesitantly answered, "Us?"

"That's right," Dad replied, "You, Sarah, Jenny and all of the tens of thousands of surviving tribulation believers."

"Yea, that's what I was saying earlier. We are all believers, so why do we need guardians of the gospel?" asked Pete.

"Think about it, Pete. You and Sarah are still young, even younger than you think. This earthly kingdom will last 1000 years just as King Jesus promised. That's a long time. I expect many more grandchildren from you and Sarah over the next 1000 years. Your future children and grandchildren and the offspring of other trib survivors will create kingdom citizens that will need to trust Jesus just as you and I did," explained Dad.

Pete answered, "I guess I just assumed that since Jesus was King and Lord here with us that everyone would just automatically want to trust Him. How could anyone see Him in all of His majesty and not want to know Him and want to love Him?"

"That's a good question," answered Dad. "Why would anyone in any age reject Him?"

Dad continued, "Pete, you and all of the trib survivors still have your sinful natures and you will pass that on to your children and them to their children. Over the next 1000 years you all will repopulate this earth. With guidance, instruction, and oversight from the resurrected saints you will rebuild your cities, plant your crops, and raise your children in the grace and admonition of the Lord Jesus. However, even on a perfect earth without natural disasters, in a perfect environment without Satan, in a time without sickness and disease, in a place without wars or even rumors of war, with a perfect king on the throne, many of your children and your children's children will reject the grace of the Lord Jesus who died and rose again. They will try to pervert and alter the true gospel of the death and resurrection of our Lord. That's why we need guardians of the gospel. We need men and women like you and Sarah who know Him and love Him to protect and proclaim this gospel so that anyone who will may come to Him."

"But, Dad," argued Pete, "we can't have unbelievers in the Kingdom. Jesus is King! Can't He just command everyone to believe?"

"You mean like He did with you when you were a hard-headed, rebellious teenager," answered his father. "I prayed then for God to make you believe, to make you listen, but He had other plans for you."

Pete knew exactly what his dad was referring to.

*2011, Houston, Texas*

Just a few weeks before his eighteenth birthday, Pete found himself standing before a Harris County criminal court judge faced with charges of breaking and entering and grand theft auto. Pete and a couple of friends had broken into his dad's church to steal the keys to the church van which they took on a joy ride. Intoxicated, they ended up crashing the van into a light pole bringing their night of crime to a sudden stop.

"What do you have to say for yourself, young man?" asked the Judge.

Before Pete could respond, the Judge began a sermon that sounded only too familiar, "Young man, you have not only broken the law, but you have made a mockery of your dad's ministry and of the church. Do you realize that you are no longer a child and you can be tried as an adult and sentenced to up to 10 years for the grievous offense?"

Pete wanted to try to say something smart like "Yea, that's why I did it." But all he could squeak out was a mumbled, "Yes, sir."

The Judge continued, "After talking with your father, Pastor Jenners, I am willing to offer you an alternative to prison."

Pete's ears perked up.

"Are you willing to reimburse the church for damage done to the van?" asked the Judge.

"Oh, yes sir!" responded Pete, thinking he had dodged 'the bullet' completely.

"Are you willing ..."

"Uh oh," thought Pete, "here comes the probation time."

The Judge continued, "Are you willing to enlist in the United States Marine Corp on your eighteenth birthday?"

Pete stood there in stunned silence, looking back at his dad and then back at the judge, he muttered, "The Marines?"

"Yes, son," answered the Judge. "Your choice -- the Marines or prison. Which shall it be?"

Pete wanted to say "prison" just to be stubborn, but seeing the nod from his father he answered, "Marines, I guess."

It did not dawn on him until he was on his way to boot camp that his dad, a former Marine, and the judge, also a former Marine had cooked up this whole idea. He wanted to be angry at them, but he was too happy to be out of the house, on his own, and not in prison.

"Like I said," continued Dad, "Jesus wanted you on the team but you were not ready then. When you were ready, He used you and Sarah to protect and rescue His people from the ravages of Antichrist."