

Guardians of the Gospel

Chapter 2 – “Copy That”

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It was just before dawn when Pete Jenners (Preacher) on his morning run found himself near the old city not far from the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus had walked and prayed over 2000 years ago. Breathing heavily, he slowed to a walk, thinking about all that had recently happened. Jesus is back, the Kingdom is come, Israel is saved, no more wars to fight, Satan is in chains, families are together, and the Temple which was partially rebuilt in the first half of the Tribulation is being remodeled, repaired and readied for worship. The first few weeks of the millennial kingdom was much like a dream, he thought. Could this really be happening? Did he really see King Jesus return, triumphantly standing on the Mount of Olives and riding into Jerusalem as LORD and King?

Everything and everyone seemed more beautiful than ever before. The Tribulation survivors received renewed energy and vitality. Those with cancers, diseases or disfigurements were healed. Eyesight and hearing were restored to the elderly. The lame could walk, the blind could see. Resurrected saints were flying to and fro, back and forth, working and ministering diligently to the Tribulation survivors. It was quite a site to see a resurrected saint healing a small child and handing her back to her grateful parents. Resurrected saints and Trib survivors were being reunited with their families and friends all around the world. Even the air he was breathing smelled fresher and felt cleaner than he had ever experienced.

As Preacher paused under a stand of olive trees, he fell to his knees and prayed. "Father, I am so unworthy of these kingdom blessings. I am most undeserving of the place that You have given me in your kingdom. You are a mighty and awesome God worthy of all honor and praise. Praise the precious name of Jesus whom you have exalted above every name. He alone is worthy to rule and be worshipped. It is in His name, the name of Jesus, my Lord and my King, that I will serve you all of the days of this glorious kingdom. Give me the courage to lead, the strength to stand and the wisdom to serve. Amen."

Preacher got to his feet and finished his run back to the house where he, Sarah, and Jenny were preparing a hot breakfast of large 'cat-head' biscuits, scrambled eggs, and to Preacher's surprise and delight, hot buttery grits. Preacher had not tasted or even seen grits since he left Texas.

"Grits?!" Preacher exclaimed loudly. "Where in the world did you find grits?"

"Your mother brought the grits and some fresh eggs from Texas this morning right after you left for your run," replied Sarah.

"She didn't stay?" asked Preacher.

"She stayed and talked for a while about Texas and the old home in Houston. I think she is as excited about going back as we are," said Sarah.

Jenny, who had just entered the kitchen, said what everyone was thinking, "Let's eat, I'm starving."

As they sat down at the small kitchen table, Jenny offered to ask the blessing and started to pray without waiting for an answer. "Lord Jesus, we are truly blessed, thank you Jesus. Amen"

Sarah commented regarding the short prayer, "You are hungry, aren't you?"

Preacher did not say a word. He was already spooning a large bowl of grits and was thankful for the short prayer. "Uh ugh," he uttered as he swathed a large spoonful of grits into his mouth.

"This tastes just like what Mama used to make," he proclaimed. Then looking up at Sarah he added, "only better," as he continued to inhale the bowl of grits.

Breakfast was fast becoming a memory as Preacher used the last bite of biscuit to wipe out the empty bowl. He leaned back to savor that last delightful taste, proclaiming, "I'm full as a tick, been on a dog three days."

"Yuck," replied Jenny, "that's gross!"

Her mother agreed. Then asked, "What's on your schedule for today?"

Preacher answered, "I'm meeting the boys from the recon team today to talk about what's next."

"Jenny and I are going by the hospital to say goodbye to some co-workers and good friends," said Sarah.

Pete (Preacher), Sarah, and Jenny spent most of the first few weeks of the kingdom reuniting with family and checking on old friends that they had met during the time of Tribulation.

Preacher's meeting with his old IDF recon team was to be more of a strategy session about what comes next. By ten hundred hours they were all assembled near the base of the Mount of Olives near where the mount had split.

There was Sergeant Eli Jones, better known as Sarge. Sarge, was a short stocky man built like a 'tank'. Of Jewish decent Sarge was born in the U. S. and moved to Israel with his family when he was a 17-year-old teenager. He joined the Israeli Defense Forces at eighteen and saw his first action in the war with Russia and Iran seven years earlier. Sarge had been wounded in battle several times and had received the Medal of Valor in the war with Russia. Sarge was an organizer and decision maker. He always knew where everything and everyone was. Sarge's position as team leader was entirely earned and well deserved.

Next was Corporal Joe Klinginstine, a man of small stature, who was born and raised in Israel but studied in the US before the Rapture. Kling was the team sniper. With over 150 confirmed kills, "Kling" was a highly valued member of the recon team. His meticulous skills of observation and detail helped keep everyone else alive.

Every team had their 'loose cannon' and this team had Ballistics expert, Corporal Jacob Epstein, also a natural born Israeli, better known as 'Boomer'. Boomer just liked to blow things up. Often. Boomer was very serious minded and sometimes even diabolical about his job. He did not appreciate the jokes made about him and his toys. About the only time he laughed was just after he had detonated an ordnance.

Next was the big guy Sergeant Ben Hurtles better known as just "Hurt." Hurt was 6' 3" and 230 pounds of pure muscle who played linebacker for the NFL's Houston Texans before football was outlawed in the U.S. Hurt could carry a 50-caliber machine gun and ammo that usually required a two-man team. Hurt's size and appearance was misleading of his kind and gentle spirit.

Then there was Corporal Pete Jenners, a quite slender man of African-American decent. Pete, better known as "Preacher" had served with honor as a Navy Seal before and during the Rapture seven years earlier. Pete's dad was a preacher who had vanished with thousands of others in the Rapture. Pete, who had rebelled against his father, turned to Christ and took up his father's mantle after the Rapture. After several years of preaching to a spiritually blind post-Rapture congregation in his home town of Houston, Preacher decided to move with his Jewish wife and daughter to Israel just before the major wars broke out. He became the unofficial 'Preacher' of the recon team.

"Man!" said Boomer, looking toward the split in the mount. "This is where things started getting really wild. When the mount split, I thought Jesus was coming back right then. I was ready to race up the mount to meet Him."

"Hurt and I both thought you had detonated the explosives too soon," said Sarge.

"Hey, did you guys know that just moments before the split occurred was when Sarge accepted Christ at Messiah and Savior?" asked Hurt.

"That's right," responded Sarge, "and I owe it to you guys and especially to Preacher who virtually prayed me into the Kingdom.

"No Sarge, it was Jesus Himself who called you to be a part of His kingdom," said Preacher.

Sarge quickly responded, "Yes, that's true, but God used you all to do it. God used your words and prayers in the bunker that night before the mount split to convict me of my need for Jesus. And unknown to me at the time, He called my family and they accepted Christ as Messiah and Savior. They are now with me in the kingdom."

All responded with a hearty "Copy that!"

Sarge continued, "But that's not all. I've been assigned to stay in Israel to help assimilate other Jewish Tribulation survivors and work to help them resettle all of the land of Israel which now stretches from the Nile River to the River Euphrates and from Dan to Beersheba. It's all of the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Until now we have never possessed all of the promise land. We will grow a people and a nation that will honor and worship our God and King for a thousand years and will not turn away to any idols or false gods. Like Jesus said, we will be like a light on a hill to guide all the nations."

"Sounds like a really big job, Sarge. Hope you have plenty of help!" said Hurt.

"Yes, you're right, Hurt. It will be a big job," said Sarge. "My main man is going to be Boomer. I'm not sure yet what we can find for him to blow up, but I'm sure we will find something."

"Copy that!" said Boomer, turning around quickly for high fives from Hurt and Kling.

Sarge continued, "There will be a large leadership team made up of survivors and resurrected saints of all the ages. I'm not sure who all is on the leadership team, but I heard that Joshua will be leading the resettlement team. He definitely knows the lay of the land. Can't wait to meet him."

Preacher commented, "I want to hear more about Joshua and how it all works out later."

"Will do," replied Sarge.

The men gathered around Sarge to pat him on the back and offer their congratulations.

Sarge responded, "Thanks guys, but it's not about me. All praise goes to King Jesus who rescued us and conquered the land that He promised our forefathers."

All responded with a hearty "Copy that!"

Kling, who had been kind of quiet, asked, "Preacher we hear that you will be on some kind of kingdom preaching team with your father. What's that all about? How did you land that gig? And how did you even miss the Rapture growing up with a preacher for a dad?"

"Slow down, Kling! One question at a time," said Preacher.

"OK," said Kling, "start with this preaching team assignment."

"First of all, it is not exactly a preaching team," answered Preacher.

He continued, "I would describe it as more of a gospel protection and proclamation team. This is a team that anyone and everyone can be a part of. The leadership team will be made up of survivor saints like myself and resurrection saints like my father that were faithful to make the gospel message clear. We will all be called the Guardians of the Gospel. This was a name I came up with when I was 10 years old after seeing the movie Guardians of the Galaxy. The name has been used often by men and women who wanted to make sure the gospel message was clear. The gospel is just as powerful and just as needed as ever before."

"I don't get it," exclaimed Hurt. "Proclaiming the gospel now would be like working on game strategy when the game is over, and you are the definite winner."

"Yea," responded Kling. "Everyone here is saved, and King Jesus is with us."

"That's right!" said Preacher. "Everyone is saved right now, but it won't be that way for long. Just in the few weeks that we have been in the Kingdom there have many babies born to mothers who were pregnant when they entered the kingdom. Tribulation survivors like us will continue to have children and our children will have children. In 100 years, there will be tens of thousands of kingdom born citizens that will need to hear the clear gospel message and will need to make the decision to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior."

Hurt quickly asked, "Preacher are you saying that my wife and I are going to live another hundred years and continue to have more children?"

"No, that's not what I am saying," said Preacher. "I am saying that you and your wife are going to live another one-thousand years and continue to have children."

"Wow, that's going to be a lot of mouths to feed," replied Hurt with a bewildered look on his face.

"Won't everyone accept Him?" asked Sarge.

"I'm afraid not," said Preacher. "Scriptures tell us that many will reject Him during this time."

Hurt was still trying to do the math in his head when he blurted out, "One kid every two years would be 500 kids. If each one of them has 500 kids, that's 25,000 grandchildren. I'm gonna be really busy for the next thousand years."

Correcting his math Sarge said, "That's 250,000 grandchildren, Hurt. You better take a math class and get a really good paying job."

The men all laughed as Hurt's weathered face turned a little red.

Sarge continued, "I guess I don't have to worry about that. My wife and I have never been able to have children, and she has had a couple of painful miscarriages."

"I wouldn't count on that staying true, Sarge. Jesus has put new life and strength in all of us Tribulation survivors," said Preacher, "and from what I've heard, delivery is much easier and less painful now."

"That would be great," said Sarge. "Can't wait to tell Jana that she might have hundreds of kids."

Hurt, not paying attention to the conversation but still thinking about 250,000 grandchildren and a good paying job interrupted by asking, "Speaking of jobs, what kind of job will be available for an ex-pro football player whose only skill is that he can tote a 50-cal on his shoulder for 50 miles?"

Preacher quickly replied, "Didn't you say you worked in construction with your dad growing up?"

To which Hurt responded, "Yep."

"There's going to be a lot of rebuilding going on in Texas and around the world. Your strength and endurance will definitely payoff. I don't think you will have a problem finding plenty of work," said Preacher.

"Did you say Texas? Why the heck would I want to go to Texas?" asked Hurt.

"Because that is where you will need to be to help me with Guardians of the Gospel," said Preacher. "Part of my responsibilities will be to recruit on-the-ground leaders for the team, and I think you and Kling would fit the bill perfectly in Texas."

Hurt stammered a little as he spoke, "I - I have never been good at speaking, and have been afraid to share my faith but that's all changed now that I've seen the glorified King Jesus and if you want me in Texas, I'm in."

"Hold on just a minute! This is moving a little too fast for me," said Kling, "I'm not sure I am ready to be a Guardian of the Gospel unless it involves a .338 round at a thousand yard target. And I'm certainly not sure I want to live in Texas."

Focusing his attention on Kling, Preacher asked, "Kling, isn't your wife, Cindy, from Texas? And didn't you meet while majoring in agri-business at Mississippi State?"

Kling admitted, "Yes, she is from Texas, and yes we met at Mississippi State, but agriculture and farming was another lifetime ago. Our college days were cut short by the Rapture. Farming was our dream but only a dream."

"That's just it, Kling," explained Preacher, "This is where dreams come true. Jesus can take your and Cindy's love and dream of farming and combine it with your sharp eye and laser focus and you are just what is needed to help feed the growing population of the kingdom."

It looked like he might be getting Kling's attention, so Preacher continued. "There are fields in south Texas that are so big you can't even see across them. Imagine what you can grow on fertile ground that has had the curse of the earth removed. No weeds, no cuckle burrs, no drought, no floods, just fertile soil, good seed, and just the right amount of rain. The corn and cotton will grow so high you will need airplanes to pick it. You will be able to help feed and clothe the citizens of the kingdom for a long, long time. Plus, you will be able to share with thousands of kingdom-born citizens the clear gospel message that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that He was raised from the dead."

By the time Preacher had finished talking, Kling's whole countenance had changed. He was hanging on every word.

"You had me at 'no weeds'," responded Kling. "I'll go wherever the King wants me to go. When do we leave?"

The first thing you and Hurt both do is get home and make sure your family is on board. If everything is 'go,' a resurrected saint who will be working with you will help get you and your family to your destination and get you settled. We will all meet in Houston in three months for our first Texas Guardians of the Gospel Conference. My Father and other resurrected saints are already in Houston getting everything set up. You will meet the rest of the team there."

"Hey, speaking of your father brings me back to one of my original questions, Preacher. How did a preacher's kid miss the Rapture in the first place?" asked Kling.

"Well Kling, that is both an easy question and a hard question. It has a short answer and a long answer," explained Preacher. "The short answer is I was stupid and rebellious. I was the typical preacher's kid. I was baptized and knew the right words to say but never had Jesus in my heart. I saw Jesus as the Savior of the world, I saw Him as my father's Savior, but I never received Him as my Savior. My older sister got it and was Raptured with my

parents. I suppose I thought since my dad was a preacher, I could get away with anything and just slide in on his coattails. It was not until I went back home after the Rapture, reading through some of my father's sermons and notes, that I realized what I had missed. Sarah and Jenny and I were saved right there in the old house where I grew up in Houston. It was shortly after that I tried to pull some of the unsaved left behind into the old church. Most of the churches had just closed its doors. I thought there would be more like me that would wake up when they realized that they had been left behind because they misunderstood the gospel message. Some came and I preached the gospel like my life depended on it, over and over, week after week, with very little response. When the U.S. Congress passed a law outlawing evangelical Christian churches, we went underground with the gospel for about eighteen months. Almost everyone blamed Christians for the problems and turmoil we faced after the Rapture. We had some success, but it was very hard on us as a family having to keep looking over our shoulders for government spies. That was bad enough, but when the U.S. declared all Jews to be enemies of the state that put an even bigger target on our backs since Sarah was both Christian and Jew. I was able to call in a few favors from some old seal buddies and got us a ride in a cargo plane to Egypt and from there we made our way into Israel. Sarah, being a nurse, went to work immediately in the hospital in Jerusalem. The only job that was available to me was in the military. And that's when I joined the IDF and eventually met you guys and the rest, as they say, is history."

"I, for one," replied Sarge, "am glad the Lord got you to Israel and to the team. You were a vital part of the team, and we could not have accomplished what we did without you. And I might not have been saved without you."

To which Hurt added, "And the part I will never forget is that we were all together at ground zero to witness first-hand the return of King Jesus."

Everyone responded with a hearty, "Copy that!"