

Guardians of the Gospel Chapter 3 – “The Promised Land”

Danny Forrest

Eli Jones, better known to his friends as Sarge, and his recon team buddy Jacob Epstein, nicknamed Boomer for his fondness of detonating explosives, settled into their seats at the Promised Land Resettlement Leadership Conference. Sarge and Boomer had both been chosen from among the many Jewish Tribulation survivors to help with the resettlement of Jews in the Promised Land. Survivor saints along with resurrected saints, just weeks into the kingdom, were assembling at the leadership conference for instruction and training.

"Can you believe it?" asked wide-eyed Boomer, studying the gathering crowd. "Just a few weeks ago we were fighting Antichrist to hold on to the last little piece of land. Now here we are, chosen to lead our people to possess all of the promised land."

Eli (Sarge) was more introspective and humbled that he had been chosen to lead. Even though the large auditorium was loud and busy, Eli's thoughts took him back to much earlier days with his family and growing up in New York City. He was amazed at just how far he had come.

In the years before the Rapture, rising anti-Semitism in Europe and the United States plus the economic boom that was going on in Israel drew Jews from around the world to return to their homeland. Jews became a convenient scapegoat for whatever was going wrong. It was certainly not a great time to be a teenage Jewish boy growing up in New York City, but this was the hand that sixteen-year-old Eli Jones and his family had been dealt. Eli's father was a successful stockbroker and had provided a very nice life for his family in New York. A declining trend in the market was blamed on tensions in the Mideast and talks of war. This tension translated to blaming Jewish stockbrokers and Jews in general for the problems. Because of this, Eli's father had made the decision, like many other Jews, to move his family to Israel. Israel's population had already more than tripled, and there were opportunities for a smart businessman like Samuel Jones.

The problems on the street were not discussed in the Jones' house until Eli came home bloodied from a fight with several boys from school. "What happened, Eli?" cried his mother as she saw Eli come in the door with a bloody nose and torn bloody shirt.

"Got jumped by four guys after school. One of them got in a lucky punch and busted my nose. I know it looks bad because of the blood, but I was too busy kicking their butts to do anything about the bleeding," answered Eli.

"Did I hear someone say they were 'kicking butts'?" asked Papa as Eli's 97-year-old grandfather entered the room.

"Papa, Eli's been in a fight!" Mother said excitedly as she examined her son's face to see the extent of the injuries.

"Did you hurt 'em, Son?" asked Papa.

This was not a surprising question since Eli, even though small in stature, was a pretty tough kid. He was a starter on the wrestling team and a state champion in his weight class. Not to mention he had achieved brown-belt status in karate. Papa knew the boys who jumped him must not have known him.

Eli's Mom quickly responded, "Why were you fighting, Eli?"

"Well Mom, it was like this..." proclaimed Eli as he began to tell the story.

As the boys approached Eli, the assumed leader of the group blurted out a derogatory question that was more like an accusation than a question. "Hey Jew boy, are you a money-grubbing Jew like your cheating Jew dad?"

"What did you say?" Eli replied quickly and angrily, even though he heard every word.

By the time Eli asked the question, he and the leader, who was about six inches taller than Eli, were standing face to face, toe to toe.

"My dad says its stock-cheating stinking Jews like your dad that cost him his job," shouted the leader just inches from Eli's face.

As he finished the sentence, he sucker-punched Eli with a quick right jab square in the nose knocking him off balance and back a couple of feet but surprisingly not to the ground. The blow bloodied Eli's nose, and blood was already dripping steadily down his face and onto his shirt. The attacker was surprised that his punch did not knock Eli to the ground. He did not realize how difficult it was to knock a state champion wrestler off his feet. As Eli regained his balance, he wiped his bloody nose on his shirt sleeve. Eli looked at the blood on his sleeve and then without looking up charged the boy, planting his shoulder hard in the boy's chest lifting him off his feet in a perfect form tackle any football coach would have been proud of. The two boys hit the ground with a thunderous thud and a loud groan from the leader as Eli landed all 175 pounds on top of his chest, knocking the breath out of the larger boy. Of course, the three friends,

even though slightly in a state of shock, jumped in and pulled Eli off of their buddy, but not before Eli planted a hard right to his attacker's jaw.

As they pulled Eli up and back, he managed to kick one of them hard in the groin. The kid went down to his knees screaming, moaning, and cussing. Eli jerked and spun, in what looked like one of his better wrestling moves, setting himself free from the grip of the other two boys. The three of them faced off, taking a fighting stance just a few feet apart. As the two attackers charged forward, Eli moved quickly towards the one on the left planting a high kick into the Adam's apple of the larger of the two. As the other boy came charging in, Eli managed to get him in a headlock with his left arm while punching him in the nose with his right, releasing even more blood onto Eli's shirt. As Eli was busy controlling the kid in the headlock, the first lead attacker came up behind Eli, hitting him with a hard blow to the back of the head knocking him to his knees. Before Eli could get to his feet, two of the boys were on his back pounding him with their fists. Then from seemingly out of nowhere this other kid came flying in, knocking the two boys off of Eli. This allowed Eli to get to his feet and regain a fighting stance next to his friend Clyde from karate class that had come to his rescue.

"Thanks, Clyde," said Eli, without taking his eyes off the four attackers standing battered before them. "I think I could have taken them though."

"You probably could have, but why should you have all the fun," said Clyde.

As Clyde and Eli took two steps forward toward the four attackers, they just as quickly took two steps back, then turned to run but not without shouting obscenities. "Stinking Jews, they ought to kill every one of you and your Jew-loving friends!"

"Wow, what was that all about?" asked Clyde. "Do you know those guys?"

"Not really! I've seen a couple of them around school," Eli answered. Then he explained, "One of the boys approached me, saying that my father was a stinking Jew that caused his father to lose his job. Then he sucker-punched me in the nose."

"Man, I'm really sorry about that," said Clyde sympathetically.

"I've been hearing about this growing anti-Jewish talk but this time it really hit close to home. No pun intended," said Eli as he tried to find a clean piece of sleeve to wipe his nose.

"Yea, I've been hearing some of that too" said Clyde. "The pastor at our church warned against anti-Semitism in his sermon last Sunday. He said that God will not let a nation or a people prosper that stands against His chosen people Israel. He also said that God has a plan to rescue, redeem, and return his people to their promised land as soon as they turn to Jesus as their Messiah. As a matter of fact, that was the name of his sermon, "Rescue, Redeem, & Return."

Interrupting and cutting short the sermon explanation, Eli said, "I don't know about the Jesus part, but thanks for the rescue."

"No problem," answered Clyde, "See you at karate class."

"Oh dear," cried Mother, as she finished wiping the blood off of Eli's face. While heading to the laundry room with his bloody shirt, she exclaimed, "Thank God for your friend Clyde!"

"I knew something like this was coming," declared Papa, "I experienced first-hand the same sort of thing over 70 years ago as a boy in Austria. Stinking Jews, that's what they called us."

"Papa, what was Clyde talking about? Jesus, Messiah, rescue, redeem? Is there something we are missing Papa?" asked Eli, anxiously awaiting his grandfather's wisdom.

Papa somewhat shrugged off the question saying, "Don't worry about that, son," and when Mom wasn't looking nodded for Eli to follow him to his bedroom.

Once in the bedroom Papa closed the door and told Eli a part of his story he had never shared with anyone else. "Eli, do you remember me telling you about the German concentration camp and the horrible stench of abuse and death?"

"Yes sir," replied Eli.

Papa continued, "Well, when the American GIs rescued us, one of the soldiers told me almost the same thing your friend Clyde told you today. I have thought about his words almost every day since."

"What does it mean Papa?" asked young Eli.

Without saying a word, Papa moved around the bed in his small room to a large chest-of-drawers and opened the middle drawer, his sock drawer. Leaning his already bent frame forward over the sock drawer, he began digging through the piles of mixed match socks like he was looking for a hidden treasure. "Ah ha!" he exclaimed as he found what he was looking for hidden underneath the piles of socks. Papa turned back to Eli and handed him an old Bible.

"That young American GI found me in the hospital days later and gave me this Bible. He said there was redemption in this book. I wasn't sure if I should be offended by the gift of a Christian Bible, but I was so grateful that he and the other Americans had rescued us that I treasured it and kept it all these years. I'm not sure why but I guarded it like my life depended on it. I didn't read it, I just kept it. Your grandmother used to ask, 'Why do you keep it if you are not going to read it?' I told her, maybe I will read it one day. The first time she asked me about it was on the boat coming to America. As a matter of fact, that's how we met. She saw the Bible among my few

belongings and asked if I was a Christian. I then explained the story of how I got the Bible. That's the first time she asked if I was going to read it."

"Did you ever read it Papa?" asked Eli who was hanging on every word his grandfather was saying.

"Yes, Eli, I began reading it just a few years ago right after my Rachael passed. To my surprise, I discovered that I was familiar with many of the stories of Moses and deliverance from Egypt, of Joshua, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These were stories I was taught as a child growing up in Austria."

"Did you find it?" asked Eli.

"Find what?" asked Papa.

"Redemption," answered Eli.

"Hold on Eli, let's not get ahead of ourselves," said Papa. "Don't you want to hear the rest of the story?"

Eli, without saying another word, sat down on the side of the bed as if to say, OK, I'm ready for the rest of the story.

"Well" said Papa, "as I was reading through the book, I discovered that someone had underlined many of the verses and had often written tiny words and notes in the margins." Turning the Bible towards Eli, he said, "See what I mean? This verse in Genesis 3:15, 'He shall bruise his head' with the word 'Jesus' written in the margin. The same thing in Genesis 15, 'And through Him all the nations shall be blessed,' again 'Jesus' written in the column. And look at this one in the 22nd Psalm. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' with the note 'Jesus' words on the cross'. And again in Isaiah, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities' with the note 'Jesus died for our sin.'" Papa, out of breath from the excitement and reading, concluded, "It is 'Jesus this' or 'Jesus that' on almost every page."

"Who would do that, Papa?" asked Eli, looking quickly at the underlined passage in Isaiah 53 and then reading out loud the words written in the margin, "Jesus died for our sins." "What does it mean, Papa?"

"It means the American GI was right! There is redemption in this book." Papa then took the Bible from Eli and turned to another passage in the book of John. Handing the Bible back to Eli, he said, "Read the underlined verse," as if that would answer Eli's question.

As Eli began to silently read John 14:6, Papa commanded, "Out loud, boy, out loud!"

Eli read, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (KJV). Then Eli asked, "Does this mean Jesus is the Messiah, Papa?"

"I believe that He is Eli," answered Papa, and after a brief pause added, "your Grandmother certainly thought so."

"Grandmother!?" questioned Eli, puzzled and surprised.

"Yes, Eli, she is the one who underlined the verses and wrote the notes in the margins of the Bible. I found a final note she had written in the back of the Bible. She wanted us all to believe it. She tried to tell me after her stroke, but I would not listen. Take a look," said Papa as he motioned for Eli to turn to be back of the old Bible.

"What did she say, Papa?" asked Eli.

"Just read it, Eli," said Papa as he struggled to his feet and slowly walked, cane in hand, across the room. Papa stopped in front of a portrait of his beloved bride, Rachael. His words to Rachael were mostly indistinguishable. The only thing Eli heard clearly was "I believe, Rachael, I believe."

Eli was deep into his thoughts of that memory when he was startled back to reality by the loud applause and cheers from the standing crowd of Jewish Tribulation survivor leaders and resurrected Jewish saints. He looked to his right to see Papa saying something indistinguishable to his radiantly beautiful resurrected Rachael. Glancing to his left Eli saw his recon team buddy Boomer standing, clapping and shouting "Hallelujah, praise the name of Jesus" with the crowd. Eli then turned back to the stage to see King Jesus, the promised Messiah, standing majestically with outstretched arms before the crowd. The crowd began to sing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." The spontaneous worship would have been endless if Jesus had not motioned for all to listen.

When King Jesus spoke, it was as though you were the only person in the room, and He was speaking directly to you. Miraculously, each person heard their own name and their own personalized message as Jesus spoke.

"Elijah Jonas," Jesus spoke, "I made a promise many years ago to your father Abraham. I have never faltered or forgotten that promise. That promise was to you and your family, Eli, and all who have called upon my name. You are here today to help me fulfill that promise. I have chosen you to lead our people and to guide them in work and worship. You and the other survivor leaders will be my hands and feet to help our people build their homes, plant their crops, establish their businesses, and grow their kingdom families. The resurrected saints that you see beside you will oversee and assist each of you in your work and ministry. For their faithfulness

they will rule and reign with me for one-thousand years. You can call on them for advice, wisdom and instruction."

King Jesus only spoke for a few minutes, but Eli and the others heard thousands of words of instruction and encouragement. His words communicated wisdom, instruction and encouragement.

King Jesus concluded by saying, "Now let me introduce to you my courageous and faithful servant Joshua. He will be your commander and leader. Listen to him and he will instruct and guide you in this resettlement process."

The crowd, still on their feet, roared shouts of "praise to the King," as Joshua stood bowing before Jesus.

As Joshua turned to face the crowd, they again roared with shouts and applause. The assembled leaders eagerly awaited instructions from Joshua. Joshua did not disappoint. He was confident and powerful. His words uplifted and encouraged all who were there. As he spoke, each leader heard his own specific instructions. Much like when Jesus spoke. He called out specific leaders for specific tasks, he laid out the boundaries of the land and pointed out the designated area for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joshua ended his message by saying, "Our Lord spoke these words to me many years ago and with His permission I speak these same words to you today." Everyone instinctively stood to their feet as Joshua spoke, "You chosen leaders," he began, "arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to you, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (NASB)

He closed by saying, "All praise and glory to our Lord and King forever."

The crowd again erupted in praise and worship.

