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## **THE YOUNG TRIBULATION FORCE**

**Original members**—Vicki Byrne, Judd Thompson, Lionel Washington

**Other members**—Mark, Conrad, Darrion, Janie, Charlie, Shelly, Melinda

## **OTHER BELIEVERS**

**Jim Dekker**—GC satellite operator helping the kids

**Chang Wong**—Chinese teenager working in New Babylon

**Cheryl Tifanne**—pregnant young lady from Iowa

**Westin Jakes**—pilot for singer Z-Van

**Tsion Ben-Judah**—Jewish scholar who writes about prophecy

**Colin and Becky Dial**—Wisconsin couple with an underground hideout

**Bo and Ginny Shairton, Maggie Carlson, Manny Aguilara**—escapees from GC jail

**Sam Goldberg**—Jewish teenager, Lionel's good friend

**Mr. Mitchell Stein**—Jewish friend of the Young Trib Force

**Chaim Rosenzweig**—famous Israeli scientist

#### **UNBELIEVERS**

**Nicolae Carpathia**—leader of the Global Community

**Leon Fortunato**—Carpathia's right-hand man

**Z-Van**—lead singer for the popular group, The Four Horsemen

#### **UNDECIDED**

**Claudia Zander**—Morale Monitor, Natalie Bishop's former roommate



# What's Gone On Before

JUDD Thompson Jr. and the others in the Young Tribulation Force are living the adventure of a lifetime. Still in Israel, Judd and Lionel Washington view a horrific plane crash, then find a ride to Jerusalem from a former terrorist.

As Vicki Byrne and her friends prepare to leave Iowa for Wisconsin, they discover their friend Pete Davidson has been captured by the Global Community. On the way, Vicki contacts an old friend, Josey Fogarty.

Chang Wong, a young believer working inside the Global Community in New Babylon, gives Judd the good news that the four believers on the plane are not dead. Instead, they are running Operation Eagle, a daring plan to save Israeli lives.

Vicki and the others return to Wisconsin after a dangerous getaway from GC forces in Illinois. There, they learn their friend Pete Davidson has died at the hands of the Global

## ESCAPE TO MASADA

Community. Still shaken by the news, the kids receive a cry for help from Morale Monitor Claudia Zander. After much discussion, Vicki, Mark, and their new friend Manny Aguilara rush to rescue her. On the way, they hear reports about a mysterious sickness breaking out around the world.

Thousands cheer the return of Nicolae Carpathia to Jerusalem as he rides a pig to mock Christ followers and Jews. The showdown begins between God's man "Micah" and Nicolae Carpathia. Lionel is horrified to see Nicolae commit murder in the temple.

Join the Young Tribulation Force as they try to survive the scariest events in the history of the world.



ONE

# Innocent Blood

LIONEL Washington took a deep breath and tried to comfort his friend Sam Goldberg. They had just seen Nicolae Carpathia murder Sam's friend Daniel Yossef inside the temple.

Thousands had gathered to watch Nicolae's every move. Many supported him, flocking outside the temple like it was some sporting event. But Carpathia's words and actions repulsed followers of Jesus Christ and Orthodox Jews. Lionel had heard how cold-blooded Nicolae could be, but he never dreamed the man would kill in front of a live camera. Lionel couldn't understand why anyone would follow this evil man.

Sam looked at one of the huge television monitors and whispered, "Do you think Daniel believed the message about Christ before he was killed?"

"I hope so," Lionel said. "It took guts to refuse Carpathia's order to shoot at those Jewish leaders."

Lionel looked around for Judd. They had become separated earlier, and Lionel yearned for a familiar face. People trembled from the pain of sores breaking out all over their bodies. Many Morale Monitors and GC soldiers had moved to quickly constructed medical tents. Others without Carpathia's mark or the seal of God on their foreheads shook their fists and sprinted up the temple steps.

Through television monitors came the clear voice of God's prophet Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig, who called himself Micah. Somehow the Tribulation Force had broken into a live Global Community Network News feed, and this small, robed man was speaking out against the evil ruler.

"As Carpathia continues," Dr. Rosenzweig said, "you should be able to see the laver where the priests wash their hands before they approach the main altar. The temple was creatively placed over a series of underground waterways where gravity allows constant water pressure for the various cleansings. Of course, he has no business in this place, and even a ceremonial washing of his hands will not exonerate him for defiling it."



For some reason the camera switched back inside the temple, and the scene was so frightening Lionel turned away. Carpathia's eyes seemed to dance with glee as he stood over the dead man's body.

Sam gasped in disgust. "Look at his hands!"

Carpathia stared into the camera and held up two bloody hands. Someone inside the room said something and Carpathia sneered. "My faithful get the message." His voice echoed in the room as he shouted. "Any who dares interrupt my pilgrimage will find his blood on my fingers!"



Judd Thompson Jr. closed his eyes. Was this a bad dream or reality? As Chaim Rosenzweig tried to convince viewers around the world of Carpathia's evil, Mr. Stein drew close and tried to explain why the robed holy men would risk their lives to stop Nicolae. The priests scrambled up the stairs, yelling and shaking their fists. Judd glanced at the video monitor above him just as the camera whirled, the screen filling with priests charging like enraged animals.

"See where this blood comes from!"

Carpathia shouted.

The priests stopped at the sight, their faces

pale. One at the front glanced at the body on the floor and threw out his arms. "Does your evil know no bounds?"

Nicolae's face reddened. "Are you the god-haters who do not know me as a god, a god acknowledged by all others, but not named by you?"

"It should not surprise you," one man said, "that we showed our loyalty by offering daily sacrifices on your behalf."

"You have made offerings," Carpathia spat, "but to another, even if it was for me. What good is it then, for you have not sacrificed to me? No sacrifice shall ever again be made in this temple except to me. Not *for* me, *to* me. Now leave or face the same fate as this unlucky one who was foolish enough not to believe that I have been allotted the nature of god!"

"God will judge you, evil one!"

"Give me your gun again, Supreme Commander!"

The priests took a step back, but one stood his ground. "We retreat not in fear but rather because you have turned the house of God into a killing field!"

Mr. Stein turned to Judd and whispered, "That is Ethan Ben-Eliezar. We have had many discussions about—"

Carpathia screamed again. "Just go! I shall have my way in my home, and should you

be found without proof of loyalty to me by week's end, you shall offer your heads as ransom."

The priests turned, shouting threats and joining their followers outside the temple. When the man Mr. Stein identified as Ethan Ben-Eliezar emerged, other priests cheered. He lifted both hands toward the sky and yelled, "Lovers of God, unite!"

The priests repeated the words until it became a chant. Judd glanced at the monitor again, expecting to see Carpathia mocking them, but Dr. Rosenzweig was back.

"The inner court inside the pillars has stairs that face east and lead to the main altar," Chaim began. "Priests who revere God march around the Court of Priests and the Holy Place with their left hands closest to the altar. This one who would trample holy ground has already begun the opposite way, so his right hand will be closest to the altar. The Scriptures foretold that he would have no regard for the one true God. What plans he has for the beast with which he ridiculed the Via Dolorosa will be revealed only as he invades deeper into God's own territory."

"He's going to do something with the pig he rode?" Judd said.

Mr. Stein pursed his lips.

Chaim continued, contrasting Carpathia's rantings with the way God had displayed his glory. "God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments were handed down. He appeared again when Moses dedicated the Tent of God. And finally he showed himself at the dedication of Solomon's Temple on this very site. Should God choose, he could reveal himself even today and crush under his foot this evil enemy. But he has an eternal plan, and Antichrist is merely a bit player. Though Antichrist has been granted power to work his horror throughout the world for a time, he shall come to a bitter end that has already been decided."



Vicki Byrne was riveted to the radio coverage from Israel. The news anchor explained that the audio was being taken from the video feed and broke in to talk over the man named Micah.

As Mark drove south, Manny Aguilara, the new believer who had escaped the Global Community, studied a map. Their plan was to rescue Morale Monitor Claudia Zander with the help of one of Manny's gang friends.

Between Carpathia's pig ride down the Via

Dolorosa and his assault on the temple, Manny told his story. Vicki was astounded when she heard how Manny had been placed in a cell next to Zeke Sr.

"Sure, I went to church with my mother when I was little. But when it came time to choose between the gang and God, the decision was simple. The gang gave me money, protection, and friends. It made sense to me back then."

"Did you ever try to get out?" Vicki said.

Manny shook his head. "I thought about it once or twice when things heated up. The police would get close or somebody would get shot and I'd wonder if it was worth it, but getting out is more dangerous than staying in."

"What do you mean?" Vicki said.

Manny pointed to a tattoo on his face, a small *x*. "I got this when I joined. Everyone knows you're part of the gang by this. They fear it. But try to leave, and your own gang wants you dead. Then other gangs come looking for you. It's easier and safer to stay in."

"Did anybody ever try to kill you?" Mark said.

Manny looked at the floor. "Our gang was into drugs. We had our territory and no one was supposed to cross the line. Our rivals

violated the boundary, so our leader said I should go along to help end the problem."

"What do you mean, end the problem?" Vicki said.

"Usually you take a couple of guys and talk with the people, to scare them. But things had gone way past scaring. The disappearances changed everything. I don't know how to explain it, but we had lots more business and the violence was getting worse.

"The meeting with this rival turned ugly. Hector pulled his gun first, so it forced me to as well. Four people died that day."

There was silence in the car. Finally, Vicki said, "Four died because of a territory dispute?"

Manny nodded. "Sounds stupid now, but back then I dreamed about killing or being killed. Dying was just part of life."

"And you think one of these gang guys will help us?" Mark said.

Manny hesitated, then nodded. "The leader, Hector."

As they drove on, Vicki thanked God that Manny's life had changed. She knew they would be in great danger and was glad people were praying for them back in Wisconsin. The kids had set up a room where at least one person would be praying at all hours.

Now, listening to Carpathia on the radio and the voice of his right-hand man, Leon Fortunato, Vicki snapped back to reality. Leon had joined Carpathia in the temple and weakly said, "You, my lord, are the good spirit of the world and source of all good things."



Judd stayed close to Mr. Stein, asking questions when there was a lull in the action. He knew Carpathia wasn't finished defiling the temple, but he couldn't believe it could get worse.

"I don't understand how these people are going to get away from here," Judd whispered. "When is Operation Eagle going to begin?"

Mr. Stein looked concerned. "That is my question as well. We must take advantage of this window and put out a call to everyone to flee before Carpathia attacks."

Jewish priests filed by them, and Mr. Stein called out for Rabbi Ben-Eliezar. They were making such a commotion, still chanting, that the man didn't hear. Mr. Stein turned to Judd. "Stay here. I will talk with the rabbi and return."

Judd nodded, leaned against a stone, and surveyed the crowd. At times the noise was deafening, with Carpathia supporters trying

to shout down the Orthodox Jews. Others who had taken the mark, Morale Monitors and soldiers, could barely stand. That seemed to give energy to the anti-Carpathia group, and they grew louder and more menacing as each minute passed.

Judd took a breath and prayed silently. "God, you know how much these people need to know you. You know how powerful the evil one is. I pray you would remove the blinders from those who haven't taken the mark yet. Help them see the truth about Jesus. And help us get out of here alive."



Lionel stayed with Sam as the crowd turned into a mob. There was so much noise around them—shouting, arguing, and people throwing dirt and stones—that the two had to huddle in a corner.

Sam finally stood, his face streaked with tears. "We'll never know if Daniel truly believed in God or not. Carpathia took his life in front of all these people and we're not doing anything."

Lionel put a hand on Sam's shoulder. "Calm down. We're going to get out of here."

"Is that what you want to do?" Sam said, pulling away. "You want to be safe?"



Sam suddenly glanced up. He whispered something under his breath as Lionel came out from behind their shelter and looked at the huge monitor nearby. Nicolae Carpathia approached a curtain that stretched out of the camera's view. Lionel noticed the crowd had quieted, mesmerized by what was on the screen.

"He's in the Holy of Holies," Sam whispered. "He's ready for the final defilement."

Carpathia grabbed the handle of a long knife he had tucked in his belt and dramatically raised it over his head. He reached as high as he could and plunged the gleaming steel through the veil. The fabric ripped as he pulled the blade all the way to the floor. Nicolae pushed each side of the curtain back, revealing the altar and the massive pig from the day before. There was no saddle this time. The pig struggled and tugged at ropes held by two men. Lionel wondered if this animal sensed evil.

Sam clenched his teeth. "I can watch this no longer. I have to do something!"

"Sam, wait!" Lionel said, trying to grab the boy's arm, but it was too late. Sam disappeared into the crowd of priests and Carpathia loyalists.



Vicki listened as the reporter in Jerusalem tried to describe the scene. Before he mentioned the pig, she heard it squeal in the background and guessed what was about to happen.

"Pull over right here," Manny said suddenly. He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand and squirmed in his seat.

"We're not that close, are we?" Mark said.

"Just pull over."

Mark parked on the darkened street and turned off his lights. Manny switched the radio off and sat back.

"What's the matter?" Vicki said.

"I didn't tell you the whole truth," Manny said. "In fact, I lied."