

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

Sydney Watson

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DEATH OF THE TWO WITNESSES

APLEON had been on the Temple mount for two hours. Part of that time he had been in the Temple itself, in and out of which there passed continually, streams of people, all curious to see the wonderful image of Apleon, the image that had spoken, and that had slain "unbelievers."

Apleon had watched the ever-moving crowds of dupes, and noticed how everyone of them bowed, or prostrated themselves before his image. He noticed, too, whenever his own presence had been realized, that the worshippers, while bowing before the image faced him, Apleon, so that they really gave him the worship.

In spite of all that Romanists, and others of a similar cult, may say, the worship of an image or of a statue, means the worship of the person imaged or sculptured - this is the very essence of all image-worship. The great Chrysostom, in one of his records of his time, says:

"When the images of the Emperor are sent down and brought into a city, its rulers and multitude go out to meet them with carefulness and reverence, not honoring the tablet or the representation molded in wax, but the standing of the Emperor."

Athanasius wrote:

"He who worshippeth the image, in it worshippeth the emperor; for the image is his form and likeness."

And the worship, in the Jerusalem Temple, of the image of Apleon, ("The Beast") was the worship of the man himself.

There is a very curious word in Habakkuk 2:19, "**Woe to him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach!**" Apleon, the Antichrist actually qualifies himself for that "woe" of God's.

A notice had been promulgated that in the "Broadway" - the wide, open square from which the great marble road to the Temple opened out, - throughout the whole day, the new "Covenant" brands would be affixed.

The "Covenant" sign, had for three years and a half been mostly worn (as we have seen) in the form of a ring on the right hand, or as a pendant frontlet upon the forehead. Some few million enthusiasts, it is true, had worn it branded on the flesh of the forehead, but this had not been universal.

Now it had been decreed by Apleon, and endorsed by his second, the false Prophet, that the wearing of a detachable "Sign," be no longer permissible, that all must be branded - or die.

Brands, in several sizes, had been prepared, which, when pressed against the forehead, and worked by a spring-lever, left the damnable mark upon the skin in deep, rich purple characters. The surface of the branding instrument was peculiarly soft and yielding, so that when, by the automatic inking, the mark was made, there was never an imperfect sign, but every character was truly formed. The ink used, claimed to be absolutely indelible, and those who had tried it, more than two years before, had found no break in any single line or curve of either of the characters.

For two hours, a hundred branders had been at work at their truly hellish task, and if the donning of the badges, three and a half years before had been in a veritable holiday spirit, the acceptance of the brand, now, was with a blend of rapturous joy, and of actual worship.

With the infernal cunning which has ever characterized Satan's efforts to thwart GOD and His CHRIST, he has counterfeited every rite, every ordinance of CHRIST's Church.

Hence Apleon, Satan's tool, is very keen upon this matter of a baptismal sign. He makes a sacrament of it (i.e. an oath or covenant of fidelity). To show their allegiance to his infernal lordship, Antichrist's subjects must now wear his brand so that it can never be erased or removed, and his chaplain ("The False Prophet") "**causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, to receive**" - literal translation - "a stamp or brand, on their right hand, or on their forehead."

The preaching of the cross, of JESUS CHRIST as the World's Redeemer, the putting away of sin, and the gift of eternal life by faith in GOD's word of grace, the baptism into the name of CHRIST, had, for several decades, been growingly scouted as "foolishness." "An obsolete doctrine," all that was voted. "Men are far too intelligent to be bound by such a Bible creed as that. New times need new doctrines," etc., etc.

The twenty years immediately preceding the manifestation of the "Man of Sin," had been characterized by such utterances, and many others infinitely more impious, blasphemous, and senseless. "**For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe . . . Because THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD IS WISER THAN MEN.**"

But when Antichrist shall promulgate his devil-doctrines, senseless, idolatrous, humiliating, the bulk of men of every grade and class, will suffer themselves to be branded like cattle in a round-up. Believing "**the lie**," deluded by that universal lie, they will have no choice, save to be branded, or to die. And to yield themselves to the infernal brand will mean to be cut off forever from GOD.

"If any man worship the Beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the Beast and his image, AND WHOSOEVER RECEIVETH THE MARK OF HIS NAME." (Revelation 14:9-11).

Simultaneous with the beginning of the branding, the two witnesses had taken up a position close by the branders, and had persistently witnessed to the near coming of the Lord in judgment upon those who wore the Mark of the Beast, while, at the same time, they denounced Apleon as the Antichrist.

Over and over again during their testimony, attempts had been made to silence them, every conceivable death - attack had been made upon them - but nothing harmed them. No weapon formed against them could prosper, until their "witness" was completed. And everyone who had assisted in any form, in attacking them, had died in the act.

Now, Apleon, attended by the ten kings, who had been summoned to Jerusalem. rode down from the Temple. At the branding station, the ten kings dismounted, and each received the foul mark on the forehead.

As the last of them received the brand, a startled wondering cry burst from some of the multitude who thronged "The Broadway," and following the many pointing fingers of the startled ones, everyone saw how that purple, lambent flames played about Apleon's forehead in the form of the "Covenant" sign.

"He doeth great wonders in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of these miracles." Revelation 13:12, 14.

"Power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." Revelation 13:7. "He shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God."

Acclaiming him as very God, the people suddenly prostrated themselves in worship before the great deceiver.

Suddenly the voices of the two witnesses were heard. Both voices were clear and distinct, yet neither clashed with the other, even though each voice used separate terms. They stood about a hundred yards apart from each other.

Everyone rose to their feet, every eye was fixed upon the two grand, fearless faces, as they thundered forth their words of warning of judgment, of entreaty. Then suddenly they turned their gaze and their speech upon Apleon himself.

As the "Te Deum" sprang spontaneously from the lips of Ambrose and Augustine, each saint voicing an alternate stanza, so now the two witnesses hurled their fulminations against the Man of Sin:

"Thou heart of all foulness and deceivableness, with the breath of His lips shall the Christ slay thee." Isaiah 11:4.

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." II Thessalonians 2:8.

"O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them." Psalm 9:6.

"It shall come to pass in that day (when The Lord shall deliver His people out of thy hands) saith the Lord, that I will break his yoke (Apleon Emperor, Man of Sin, Antichrist) from off thy [peoples] neck." Jeremiah 30:8.

"Judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Daniel 7:26.

"For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Isaiah 30:33.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Revelation 19:20.

Low and mocking, a laugh broke from Apleon, upon whose brow there still played that lambent flame. The laugh was caught up by the multitude, until one far-reaching volume of mocking, derisive laughter went rolling out-and-away from The Broadway, to Gareth and Goab, and every other suburb of the city, and back again.

As the last echo of the laughter died away, Apleon called, to his Viceroy:

"Where is the axe and the block?"

"Here, Sire!"

A score of men bearing broad, gleaming axes, with thrice a score of others, bearing, each three, a blood-red enameled block, came forward into the center of the square.

"Take those two driveling prophets, and behead them!" cried Apleon.

A thousand hands were stretched towards the witnesses. This time they were readily taken. Their bodies were dragged to the blocks, and with one stroke to each, they were beheaded.

With a shout of triumph, that spread far and wide, the people acclaimed Apleon as "God Almighty."

"Let no man touch that carrion, to bury it!" Was the order of Apleon.

That was to be doubly his hour of triumph. All arrangements had been made for his official coronation. An immense awning of purple and gold silk, was stretched over the whole of "The Broadway."

The time occupied in stretching the whole thing was not more than sixty seconds. A throne of Ivory, Pearl, and gold was set in the center of the pavement, beneath the awning. Everything was done with the rapidity of a stage-setting in a theatre - it was all very theatrical!

A score of trumpeters executed a wonderful fanfare, then, amid more pomp than the world had ever yet seen, a crown, of fabulous value and of extraordinary magnificence, was set upon the head of Apleon, who occupied the throne, each of the ten kings actually touching, and helping to set the crown upon his head.

Hitherto, Apleon, though upheld by the ten kings and governments, had, after all, been an uncrowned Dictator. Now, in the hour of his seeming triumph over "The Two Witnesses," he was crowned Roman Emperor of the ten-kingdom confederacy.

When the coronation ceremony was finally completed, and Apleon, mounted on his black horse, and surrounded by the ten kings, started to ride back to the Palace, he ordered messages to be flashed to all the cities of the world, announcing three days of rejoicing over the slaying of the Witnesses, and also the announcement of his own coronation.

The rejoicings in Jerusalem, Babylon, and elsewhere, over the death of "The Witnesses" was wilder than the "Mafficking" in England of the Boer war days. The two Witnesses had been a source of torment and fear upon all peoples (save those who clove to God) and now that their headless bodies lay stark and dead on the marble pave of "The Broadway," the people **"rejoiced upon them, made merry, and sent gifts one to another."** Revelation 11:10.

The outrage upon decency, sanitation, and even common humanity, in suffering the two bodies to remain unburied, lasted three days and a half. Three days and a half was long enough period for the representatives of every nation, gathered in the city and neighborhood, to be perfectly assured that they were dead. **"And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves."** Revelation 11:9.

When Edward the 7th of Britain, lay dead in the great Abbey of the Empire, it was counted high honour to be part of the silent guard over the coffin.

And men almost fought for the privilege to stand guard over the headless forms of the Two Witnesses lying on that marble pave in Jerusalem: **“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”** Luke 13:33.

But these death-guards were not silent. They laugh scornfully, derisively, and crack jokes upon the now silenced testimony of the Two Witnesses. Caricatures, and comic cuts upon their lives, their death, their oft-repeated warnings, were printed and sold in the streets of the city.

It was the evening of the fourth day after the setting up of the image in the Temple, and three and a half days since the Witnesses were slain. At last, a final public function before the dispersal of the kings, and others specially gathered for the coronation, and other ceremonies, had been arranged for 6 o'clock in "The Broadway."

Apleon, and the other kings had gathered. The trumpeters had blown one blast upon their silver instruments, when a cry of horror burst from the gathered multitudes. For the bodies of the Two Witnesses suddenly stood upon their feet.

They were facing Apleon, as they stood up. Their eyes met his startled, fearsome gaze. His face was deathly pale. A tomb-like hush of awe and fear was upon the gathered peoples.

Suddenly, overhead, three deep notes, like thunder rolled through space. The multitude thought it was thunder, the resurrected Witnesses knew it for the voice! of their Lord, crying **"Come up hither!"**

And instantly their bodies rose in the sight of all the people. No awning was spread over the square, this evening, and every eye beheld the ascent of the resurrected saints, a wondrous cloud seeming to upbear them upon its billowy whiteness.

An overwhelming fear fell upon everyone. The arranged kingly function was suspended. Yet still the people remained. It was as though they were spellbound.

And while everyone waited, wondering and fearing, a low, deep rumbling was heard beneath their feet. Then the earth trembled, and rocked.

For one long, shuddering instant every voice was hushed, horror got hold of the people. Then in a moment yells and shrieks of terror escaped men and women alike. From the roofs of the houses there came piteous cries for help, for, with the trembling of the earth, the houses rocked like children's houses of cards.

It grew dark, and bewildered by the sudden awfulness of the whole situation, and maddened by the hopelessness born of the sense of insecurity of even the foot of ground upon which each stood, the mob rushed blindly hither and thither.

Panic, in its most hideous form got hold of them. In their blind, unseeing rushes they collided with each other, and a score of fierce passions leaped to life within them, chief of which was a lust for war. Madly, savagely, senselessly, neither knowing or caring with whom they fought, they stabbed and shot, and clawed and scratched, and boxed and wrestled with each other.

The many horses stampeded, and beat down hundreds of the people beneath their iron hoofs.

The darkness deepened, it grew sooty, inky. The horrors pressed upon the people, women and children, and even men groveled on their faces in the dust, clutching and clawing at the ground.

Thunder in the heavens, and thunder under the earth deafened and terrified every soul. Fierce, wide, jagged ribbons of awful flame came out of the blackened heavens. Scores of thunderbolts, red and flaming, leaped out of the blackness of cloud above, and, hissing as they came, wrought awful death among the mobs upon which they descended. The smell of burning flesh filled the air, making a new horror.

The thunder and rumble beneath the earth increased. The whole surface of the city heaved like the swell of a storm-tossed sea. Chasms, fissures, gulfs yawned everywhere, and thousands of people toppled into the opened earth. Suddenly, the whole heavens were filled with an appalling succession of frightful crashings; it was as though hundreds of millions of powerful rockets were exploding in successive volleys of millions each. Beneath the earth, thunders and crashings went on at the same time. Then, in every direction, the earth fissured and gaped and yawned wider than ever, and with blood-curdling roarings and crashings, a whole tenth part of the city tottered and fell into the yawning gulfs, with thousands upon thousands of people.

Slowly, the rumble of falling buildings, and the hideous thunders below and aloft died away, and a strange, awesome hush fell upon the city. Slowly, too, the darkness melted, leaving the sky blood-red. The blood gradually merged into pink towards the center of the dome, the pink became gold, then every living eye in the city and suburbs became centered upon that golden center, and all saw the forms of the Two WITNESSES, with a pavement of dazzling white cumulus beneath their sandaled feet.

The wondrous scene was as the very voice of GOD to the watching multitudes, if they could but have understood, the voice testifying to the power and truth of GOD and His word.

It was the new, the fashionable part of the city that had suffered in the earthquake and its attendant horrors - the part of the city where "Satan's seat was," chiefly.

With the engulfing of the most fashionable part of the city, there was a consequent heavy toll of human life. Seven thousand men of name, of notable rank, perished in the earthquake.

When the last building had tottered into the yawning chasms of the riven earth, and the souls of the late deriders of GOD had toppled into their hell; when the clouds of dust had cleared away; when no further earth-rumble came, then with a gasp of terror the remainder of the gathered thousands of people **"Gave glory to God."**

There was no worship; no sorrow for their sin; no repentance; not even any remorse; certainly no conversions of the whole mass, any more than were of Jannes and Jambres, when they declared, of the Miracles of Moses and Aaron, "**This is the finger of God.**"

Some there were, who had been near to yielding to the pleadings of the Two Witnesses, who were wholly won to GOD in this hour, but the vast mass of the people continued to worship the Beast. Their cry to GOD had been but a terror-stricken cry.

By the morning the gathered masses had wholly recovered themselves, and the suspended public function was carried out. One part of this function was the partition of Palestine among certain rulers, millionaires, and others. "**He (Antichrist) shall divide the land for gain.**" Daniel 11:39.

With the horror and fear of the survivors of this earthquake, the "**Second Woe**" was finished, "**and behold the third woe cometh quickly.**"

~ end of chapter 14 ~

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