

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE INVESTITURE

A GREAT hush fell upon those who gathered within that Temple. It was not an awe from the sense of the divine - for GOD was not there in His glory and power, since Antichrist's spirit filled the place. It was not the awe of silence and subjection to the world's greatest ruler - though, presently, something of that would come upon those gathered when they had eyes, ears, and mind for Apleon the Emperor. Neither was the silence one of curiosity in the character of the service in which they had been called to take part. The hush upon the assembly was one of wonder and amaze at the splendor of the Temple's interior in which they found themselves.

Gold - there was no silver, - precious stones, sandal-wood, marbles such as had never been seen by any eye before, all fashioned into a wondrous style of architecture peculiarly unique, yet withal holding a perfect harmony - such is (not a description, for a description, in detail would baffle the clearest mind and cleverest pen) - a bold mention of a few of the chief materials.

The artist-architect - he must have been as much an artist as an architect to have designed the style - had taken some ideas from the description, in Ezekiel, of the Millennial Temple. There was the palm, the cherub with two faces, (the young lion and the man) so that the face of a young lion was on the one side toward the palm, and the face of a man on the other side toward the palm. The vine and the pomegranate were there. In spite of the most profuse detail all was rendered with a perfection of minuteness, while throughout the whole of the interior the harmony of color was beyond praise - and beyond description.

For the technical skill exhibited in each separate item of color, carving, and "cunning" workmanship, had, with truest artistic sense, been subordinated to that wondrous balance of the whole appearance that went to make up the amazing harmony that was as a veritable atmosphere in the place. To combine in a chromatic scheme so much brilliance and color without even a suspicion of gaudiness, or the bizarre, was a triumph of art.

The light in the place was a true adjunct to the effects produced by the wondrous composition of the blended glory and color.

There was no window anywhere, but "Radiance," the newest light of the day, tempered by rose-pink and palest electric blue prisms, filled the place with a wondrous radiance, while at the same time the eye could not detect the various spots where the separate lights were located.

The company gathered was in harmony with the place, since the many otherwise gaudy tints of costume and uniform were softened, blended, and harmonized by the power of color-tone of the prisms through which the otherwise fierce, flashing "Radiance" was shed.

The outer temple interior - the place where the brilliant throng was gathered - would hold a thousand persons comfortably. (There was no seat in Solomon's temple, as there was no seat in the Tabernacle, which was a symbol of the ever unfinished work of the earthly priesthood). And there was no seat here, save a throne-chair of gold, ivory, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones, that occupied the center of a magnificent dais just in front of the entrance into the very small "holy of holies."

A wonderful curtain of purple velvet - not the fine twined linen as of old - screened off this narrow strip of the interior, from the larger outer section. The curtain was worked with marvellous needlework in gold and pearls of almost priceless value, the pattern being a wonderful blending of cherubim, palm, and pomegranate.

On entering the building, the Emperor Apleon, seated himself on the Throne, when each person present made a deep bow of obeisance. One man only remained upright - George Bullen. Taking advantage of his position behind a marble pillar, he held himself erect. Had he been detected, he would have rapturously sacrificed his life rather than have bent to the Antichrist.

The platform of the dais, on which the throne-chair stood, was reached by three wide marble steps that sprang from the floor-level. At the foot of these steps, Cohen the High-priest elect, stood clothed in a single garment of pure white linen, that reached from his shoulders to his feet. Attendant priests stood by, each holding one garment or ornament, as the case might be, ready for the investiture.

Apleon rose from his throne, a magnificent, but a sardonic figure for all that. As he rose, soft, weird music came from an angle where a screen of palm-ferns was placed. Though mechanical, the music was of an exquisite character.

Then, suddenly, swelling above the low weird music, came the voices of a score or more white-robed priests, chanting:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God!"

George Bullen's eyes were fixed upon the face of Apleon, and he noted the mocking, contemptuous smile that curled his lips at the language of the chant.

As the chant finished, Cohen turned and faced Apleon, and slowly climbed the steps. The music had ceased now, and, amid an absolute silence, Apleon took "the embroidered coat" from the offered hands of one of the subordinate priests.

The garment was of white linen wonderfully, beautifully embroidered. It reached from the shoulders to the feet and fitted the body closely, a draw-string of white linen tape fastening the sleeves at the wrists, and drawing the breast of the vestment close about.

A linen girdle "four fingers wide," and long enough when tied to reach the feet, was next put about Cohen by Apleon. Then a third priest handed the Emperor, "The Robe of the Ephod." This was a long, loose garment of Royal blue satin, with a wide neck-opening, the opening bound with a wide gold band. The Robe was slipped over the head, and it dropped to the feet of the High-priest. Upon the lower hem of the Robe was a rich, deep fringe of alternate blue, purple, and scarlet tassels made in the form of pomegranates. Between each pomegranate was a golden bell.

Still amid an absolute silence, the investiture proceeded. Apleon took the costly and beautiful Ephod of a fourth priest. This vestment was in two pieces, one for the front, the other for the back. They were joined together, at the shoulders, by bands of wide gold braid, and buckled with two of the Antichrist covenant badges. Apleon had provided himself with these, and no one probably, save George Bullen, noticed of what the bucklings consisted. But nothing escaped Bullen, for while the attention of everyone else in the place was given only in a general way to the robing of the High Priest, his whole and absolute attention was concentrated on Apleon, all that he did, every varying expression of his handsome but sardonic face, and every movement of his fingers.

Another priest handed "The curious girdle of the Ephod." But, unlike the ordained adjunct, as given in Exodus, in this case it was a separate piece, and instead of being of the same stuff, was a cunningly worked band of gold studded with many gems. The girdle handed to Apleon, fastened with a clasp. The clasp was worth a Jew's ransom, and like the breast-plate - presently to be slung about the neck of Cohen - was a gift to the Temple by Apleon.

But the gift was accursed, for among the curiously, twisted gold of the clasp, the "Mark of the Beast" could be traced, if carefully scrutinized.

The Ephod Girdle being clasped, a priest handed the breastplate to the Emperor. It should, according to the Mosaic command, have been made of the same material as the Ephod - "of gold, of blue, of purple, of scarlet, and of fine twisted linen."

But in this case it was made of gold, and slung by a gold chain about the High-priest's neck.

The gold filigree setting for the stones, held within its cunning workmanship that same damnable sign - "The Mark of the Beast," though only a very keen, clever eye would have detected the foul hieroglyphic among the twistings of gold patterning. The whole plate was about ten inches square, the center divided by gold ribs, across and across, into twelve sections, each section holding a separate precious stone of fabulous wealth. Just for a moment or two the wondrous mechanical music stole out again upon the silence. Lovers of music recognized part of Schubert's "*Unfinished Symphony*." What wondrous melody there was in the fragment! The priests' voices chanted again, and all the time the face of Apleon wore its mocking smile.

Reading from the top-right to left, as the breastplate hung on the breast - the stones and their significance ran as follows:

CARBUNCLE, <i>Zebulun</i>	TOPAZ, <i>Issachar</i>	SARDIUS, <i>Judah</i>
DIAMOND <i>Gad</i>	SAPPHIRE, <i>Simeon</i>	EMERALD, <i>Rueben</i>
AMETHYST, <i>Benjamin</i>	AGATE, <i>Manasseh</i>	LIGURE, <i>Ephraim</i>
JASPER, <i>Naphtali</i>	ONYX, <i>Asher</i>	BERYL, <i>Dan</i>

The last piece of this wonderful Robing, was the Mitre. It was really a turban of pure white linen, an oblong shield-shaped plate of pure gold, being attached to the fullness of the deep, front roll of the turban. Engraved in Hebrew characters upon the plate, were the words: "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Here again, keen and practiced eyes would have detected the foul sign of the "man of sin," among the wondrous, and delicate chasing of the gold around the Hebrew lettering.

It has taken twenty times longer to record this robing than the time actually employed. As a matter of fact it occupied but a few minutes. Then, at last, the work was complete, and the silence was broken.

It was the Emperor who spoke: "Behold the Priest of the Most High God!" he cried.

Every soul present, save George Bullen, was more or less under the spell of the Arch-Deceiver, or they would have caught the sneer in the rich full voice, even as George Bullen caught it.

True to his journalistic instinct, as well as to his new desire as a Christian, to know well the Word of GOD, Bullen had read over, the night before, the passages in Exodus and Leviticus, relating to the robing of the High priest, and had been struck with this fact, that the High priest himself did nothing, took no active part in his robing. Moses, as GOD's representative, did everything.

Now as he recalled this, and while he considered why Apleon should have "acted valet" to a Jew priest, there recurred, with startling power to Bullen, the words of prophecy by Daniel, concerning the "Man of Sin:" **"he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God."**

"He has purposely chosen to do this robing business, quietly setting himself up as GOD," was the thought of Bullen. There was no time for further musing. The newly-invested High-priest was speaking:

"Bring hither the 'Torah' - Roll of the Law."

A serious-faced young Jew, a praying shawl over his head, bore towards the High-Priest - the parchment scroll loosely-cased in a silken slip-off. As he bore the sacred roll he reverently kissed the tassels of the drawstring of the silken slip.

The attendant drew off the cover, and dropping it across his left shoulder, unrolled the scroll, and held it extended for the High-priest to read.

Cohen made a sign to a priest who held a Shopfar (hallowed ram's horn) in his hand. Instantly the priest covered his head with his "*talate*" (praying shawl) and lifting the horn to his lips he blew "the great Teru-gnah."

Every Jew presently covered his head with his prayer shawl, and the High-Priest, cried:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God!"

Then turning to the scroll, he read in a curious, monotonous intone, part of Solomon's prayer at the opening of the Temple:

"Now then, O Lord God of Israel, let Thy word be verified (on the morrow of this day). Thy word which Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant David. Amen."

Inclining his head towards the scroll-bearer, as a sign that he had finished his brief reading, he cleared his voice and addressing his own people, said:

"Brethren, fathers, sons of Father Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, because that the good hand of our GOD hath been upon us, we are once more restored to our own land. No longer trodden down by stranger's feet, Jerusalem is again for the Jew, and the Jew for Jerusalem. We meet here this afternoon in our own Temple, reared by Jewish gold and patriotism. Our Father's Temple, Solomon's could have been but a poor synagogue compared to this in which we are now found. To-morrow, all the world will be gathered to this place, (all that part of the world worth calling the World) to the formal, official opening of this Temple. To-morrow, for the first time since this city, and since "Herod's" Temple were destroyed, we shall slay the morning and evening lamb, the daily sacrifice ordained by our GOD.

"Today we have an accredited place among the nations. There may be special Jewish reasons for the coming to pass of this universal recognition of our race, but chief among the factors that have gone to bring all this about, is the friendship of Lucien Apleon, Emperor, Dictator of the world."

Cohen turned and bowed to the throne where Apleon sat, his face filled with a smile in which pride in his position and quizzical mirth at Cohen's allusion to the soundness of the Jewish position. were mingled.

There was a slight movement among the kings, and other grandees, and amid murmurs of assent at Cohen's allusion to the Emperor, the member of the Royal confederation bowed to the throne.

Cohen proceeded: "In spite of our position, today, fathers and brethren, we could not maintain it a week, and certainly we could not strengthen and consolidate it, but for our Emperor. We desire to maintain, to strengthen our position, hence it has seemed good to the great International Jewish committee to seek to have a covenant with Lucien Apleon, Emperor-Dictator of the World. The covenant is for seven years.

We on our part are to serve him in every way, he on his part to guarantee our protection - for we have neither Army or Navy - in return for our allegiance to him.

"This covenant, duly drawn up, is here for final signature this afternoon. As your elected High-Priest, and representative of our race, I shall sign it on behalf of our people, our Emperor will also affix his signature. Then all of us, as a sign of our covenant and our allegiance, will wear a badge which has been prepared. The badge can be worn - like the written Law of our GOD, as commanded by our father Moses, 'as a sign upon our hand, or as a frontlet between our eyes-.'

"Many millions of the badges have been prepared, made in white metal for free distribution to the poorest of the world, or jeweled, gold or silver, for those who would fain purchase something more in accordance with their rank, station, or wealth. The time is at hand when no one will be able to buy or sell, save he who wears this sign."

He paused, and turning to where a little knot of white-robed priests stood, they parted, and showed an exquisite little table of gold and pearl, and on the table a jeweled casket of marvellous workmanship.

Two of the priests bore the table to the center of the floor where Cohen stood. He opened the casket, drew forth a small silk-tasseled parchment roll, and laid it open upon the table. The two priests held down the curling corners.

A fountain pen - the cylinder of jeweled gold - lay in a hollow of the casket. Cohen took the pen, and wrote at the foot of the text of the covenant:

"In the Name of our GOD, the GOD of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and on behalf of His chosen people, I Solomon Isaac Cohen (Aaron), First High-Priest of the new era, in the City of Jerusalem, on the ninth day of September, 18-, (world's calculation) subscribe myself."

As he lifted his form erect again, he made a sign to the two priests. They lifted the table and bore it up to the platform of the dais.

Apleon, without rising from the throne, took the pen and made his signature. Two seals were affixed, Cohen and Apleon, touched them, then the table was once more lifted to the floor level, and the ten kings signed the covenant, as witnesses.

Then everyone present, save George Bullen, donned one of the badges. In the crowding, his non-compliance was unnoticed. All the kings and most of the princes and others, from Babylon, received massive and costly signet rings from the hands of Apleon, himself, Each signet was engraved with "The covenant Sign," as it was called.

GOD calls it "**The Mark of the Beast.**"

The recipients of the rings, all wore them on the third finger of the right hand, as did others of the minor personages. Many of the Jews, in their enthusiasm, wore one of the "Signs" in the center of the forehead, held in position by a fine gold chain that passed round the head, as well as one on the right hand.

When the "Covenant" badges had been donned, Apleon was hailed as the world's deliverer, the whole Temple ringing with the plaudits of the kings and others.

A moment, and he passed outside, and stood on the top step of the Temple flight.

Again the "Hurrahs" were raised, and caught by the multitudes that thronged that wide marble approach to the gates of the Temple, and caught again and again by ever more distant peoples, until in a moment or two, from three to four million people, inside and outside the city, were belching forth their acclamings of a demon, counting him almost GOD.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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