

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

Sydney Watson

Copyright © 1918

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FLIGHT! PURSUIT!

THROUGHOUT the latter half of the "Day of Blasphemy," when the "Abomination of Desolation," had been set up in the Temple of Jerusalem, the exodus of fearsome, fleeing people went on. With nearly three million visitors, from every land, the more or less rapid departure of a hundred thousand or more, was not noticed. In fact, more than that number of persons might be expected to leave every twenty-four hours - the ordinary exit of visitors after the special visit.

But, presently, it was reported to Apleon, that a mighty exodus of Jews and Gentiles, few of whom wore the "Brand of the Covenant," had taken place, and was still taking place. He had spies everywhere.

The whole of Jewish population, with those on visit to the city for this special occasion, were either for the Antichrist or against him, those against him were but a very small minority.

The deluded, idolatrous Jews will hate and betray their nearest and dearest relations and friends, as Micah prophesied that they would: "**Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.**" Micah 7:5. And endorsing this, JESUS said: "**Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.**" Matthew 24:9, 10.

With father, mother, brother, lover, sister, friend all acting as betrayers of their own kith and kin, Apleon soon learned much that he needed to know as to the fugitives. He discovered that the many thousand fleeing Jews had, first, at least, travelled southwards, and he instructed his emissaries to ascertain the objective point of these fleeing Jews. He left the whole thing in the hands of his chaplain, "The False Prophet," who had the essence of all the subtlety of Hell in his composition, with all the devilish ingeniousness of cruelty of every Inquisitor who had ever practiced in past days. A "lamb" in seeming, he was a "dragon in actual nature." Revelation 13:11.

Spies had informed him that Cohen, the first high-priest, was undoubtedly the leader of the fugitives, but that his wife and daughter had refused to accompany him. "They are wholly with our World-Lord, Apleon," one of the spies had said.

"Will Cohen, think you," asked the chaplain, "steal back under cover of one of the dark nights and try to induce his wife to join him?"

"No," laughed the spy. "He will think himself well rid of her. She has been the plague of his life. Every drop of her blood is as sharp as the juice of a lime. Her lips distil wormwood. And vinegar is a cloying sweetness compared to her kindest thought or utterance, and-"

"But the daughter," interrupted the chaplain, sharply, "What of her? Is she a replica of her mother?"

"Not a bit, not a bit of it!" And the eyes of the betrayer flashed with a new light. "Miriam is as beautiful as a houri, as fair as the light of a sun-lit day after a black night of tempest, and as sweet in disposition as Rachel, the favored of our father Jacob."

"If she is all this, why is she unwed? or perhaps she loves, and perhaps we could make her a tool of her lover, and thus find out where her father has led those dogs of fugitives."

There was a look of hate and malice in the eyes of the betrayer, as he answered: "Yes, she loves, loves as her very life, but the man she loves is an even greater zealot than her father, and he has gone with Cohen - curse him! may he never more be seen by Miriam!"

The chaplain laughed maliciously: "Oh! the wind blows in that quarter, eh? You love the fair Miriam, but another has cut you out!"

The betrayer was inclined to be surly, but the chaplain knew how to speak like the "lamb," and quickly mollified the young Hebrew. Then, together, they plotted and conferred, their plotting based on the supposition that young Isaac Wolfenstein, the fugitive lover of Miriam would return, secretly, to induce Miriam to share the loyal-to-The Lord flight of himself and her father.

* * * *

The vineyard of Cohen was an eighth of a mile from his villa, and the villa was a mile and a half from the Jaffa Gate of the city. Miriam had wandered out as far as the vineyard, for her heart was too sore to sleep that night. She made her way to the arbor, where so often Isaac and she had held sweet and tender discourse. During the last twelve hours, she had turned unto GOD and unto the Messiah who was so soon to come to deliver His people and to set up His kingdom.

She had gazed upon the resurrected Two Witnesses, as they had appeared, glorified, in the Heavens, after that awful earthquake. And, recalling the words of their preaching, and all that her lover and father had urged upon her before they reluctantly left her, to flee the city, she had been suddenly bowed before GOD, in penitence and prayer.

"If only Isaac would come back for me," she moaned, as she dropped wearily upon the seat of the arbor.

"He has come back, Mirry, darling!"

At the first sound of the voice that spoke, she leaped to her feet, crying: "Isaac! Isaac! Forgive me, dear, that I-"

She got no further, his arms enclosed her fair form, his hot lips gave and received love's pure caress, and when at last he spoke again, it was to say: "GOD has given us again each other, darling, and nothing but death must ever part us again."

The hours passed and to them they seemed but as minutes. He had much to tell of the flight of the Believers, as he termed them, and had many words of message from her father.

The morning comes early in Palestine. At the first blush of dawn they stole out of the vineyard, to where his motor waited. They had eyes only for each other, as, hand in hand, they moved through the morning twilight. Then, with a bewildering suddenness, from the off-side of the motor, a dozen crouching men sprang out.

Five minutes later, amid the mocking, jeering laughter of their captors, they were being taken to the city - only not together. Miriam was forced to ride in the car seated by the side of their betrayer, the man whom she hated, and whose love-overtures she had scorned and repulsed.

Her wrists and her ankles were bound with cords, and she had been lifted into the car, bodily, by the man of her hate. To humble her and to shame her, the cur had kissed her again and again before her captive lover, then with a carefully judged malice, he had seated her, by his side, on the seat that faced the rear of the car, so that her captive-lover would be further tormented by the sight of her, compelled to accept his, his rival's, caresses.

Isaac Wolferstein was cruelly bound, fastened to the rear of the car, and made to stumble over the road, and often to be dragged, when the pace of the car carried him off his feet. Once or twice he almost fainted, for the soles of his feet were skinned - his captors had purposely divested him of his shoes and socks. The ants found out the bare, bleeding feed and added torment to his pain.

The city was astir as the car entered. The news was shouted from the car, that one of the accursed, who defied "The Lord, Apleon," had been captured, and was to be tortured in the Broadway.

* * * *

The great open space was crowded with people. As, of old, the Roman populace gathered in holiday, theatre mood to see the Christians tortured and slain, so had this great concourse gathered about the beautiful Miriam, and her handsome lover Isaac Wolferstein.

One of the Kiosks, from which "Covenant" brands were worked, was opened, and the spring instrument was brought out. Apleon's chaplain was there, and in a voice heard clearly by everyone at the farthest remove from him, he asked:

"Isaac Wolferstein, will you worship "The Lord Apleon?"

Wolferstein was hoarse with pain and thirst, but lifting his head proudly, he looked the "False Prophet" full in the eyes, as he cried fearlessly:

"Never! Apleon, is a demon, and of his father Beelzebub!"

"Silence, you beast!" yelled his tormenter, and he struck him across the lips with the stick he carried. Then he turned towards the beautiful Jewess, saying:

"Miriam Cohen. Will you worship our Lord Apleon, and wear his brand?"

"Never!" she cried.

He spat at her, as he said, "Well, we shall see!" He turned to Wolferstein again, saying: "Where has Cohen, the ex-priest, and that herd of disloyal pigs gone?"

"I will not tell you!" replied the captive, proudly. "You defy me, so be it. Aha, aha!" The "False Prophet" laughed mockingly. Turning to some of the Apleon guards who were massed on two sides of the Broadway, he said:

"Strip him! and lash him-." He lifted his eyes to the sun, calculated how it would travel, then, with a fiendish smile, he indicated one of the pillars of the colonnade, "lash him there were the sun will reach him."

They tore the clothes from the fine form of the loyal young Jew. Then, when he was absolutely nude, they fastened him to the pillar.

A honey-seller stood in the crowd. An officer of the guards spied the man, and called him out. "Take a handful of that fellow's honey," he ordered one of his men, and lightly smear that foul Jew's back and shoulders, his face and ears too. Don't put it on thickly, but as light as you can, that the insects may find his flesh through the honey."

The officer's bidding was done. Then began as hideous a martyrdom for Isaac Wolferstein, as had ever come to a soul loyal to GOD. The flies, ants, and a score of other stinging things found him out. His honey-smearred flesh was black with them.

In his agony and torture he turned his eyes upon Miriam. "My darling!" he cried, as well as his dried leather tongue and throat would let him. "God will pardon you, surely, if you bend to circumstances, and wear the foul sign!"

"But I should never forgive myself, Isaac," she called. "And how could I meet The Lord's searching eye, if I failed Him now. Courage, courage dear one!"

She knew, as we know, that Wolferstein meant no disloyalty to his GOD, but that he was momentarily beside himself with the agony of his torture and his love for her.

With a very suave, mocking smile, "The False Prophet" spoke across the six yards that separated him from Miriam, saying:

"Tell us where your father and that foul herd that went with him, are located."

"I will not, not even if you torture me to death," she cried.

"Wait until your torture begins, before you brag!" this to Miriam. Then turning to some of the soldiers, he cried: "Strip her, don't leave a rag upon her, and treat her from top to toe with that smearing of honey!"

Wolferstein shut his teeth sharply with the agony that swept over him at this order. In that moment he was unmindful of his own torture, in his dread contemplation of his loved one's shaming and torment. He shut his eyes that he might not see all that followed.

The brutal soldiery took a fiendish delight in fulfilling the order given them. They literally rent the clothes off the beautiful girl in strips and ribbons. Then when she stood absolutely nude before them, they smeared the beautiful form with the honey.

"Lash her to that pillar," cried Apleon's hellish deputy. He indicated a pillar, adding: "While they will both get the full benefit of the sun, they can see each other - lovers are never really happy out of sight of each other!"

There was a roar of laughter at this thrust.

We cannot - there is no need to detail all their sufferings. In less than two hours both were crazed with the blistering sun, and the ravaging of the foul and biting insects.

Once, just before the crazing robbed him of coherent thought, the mind of Wolferstein travelled to the Psalm he knew so well from his childhood's days, and his black backed lips feebly murmured:

"Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravaging and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me . . . But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog."

The lovers were alike, both past speech a moment later, and it looked as though they would soon be past consciousness. Not a single eye, apparently, in all that vast crowd, had cast a glance of pity upon them, no voice had been raised in sympathetic pleading for them. Devilism was the heart of all things, and it changed men and women into veritable demons. Their persecutors had been as fiends in their torturing, and the onlookers enjoyed the scene as of some fine sport. And now it looked as though both were dying. Both were losing consciousness. The half-closed eyes were blood-shot; the lips were baked black, and hideously swollen; their mouths were open; and where the suffused blood - from the fierce knottings of the cords that bound them - showed blue and purple, the veins were swollen to the bursting point.

"The block and the axe!" commanded "The False Prophet." The grim things were brought.

"Loose the carrion!" came the next command.

A dozen hands were busy in a moment with the knotted cords. Miriam was the first to be fully released. Her eyes were closed; her breaths were heavy, slow throbs; her beautiful form bent and swayed; and the soldier who held her had to bear all her weight. He carried her to the block; then, waiting, glanced for instructions to where the officer of the guards, and "The False Prophet" stood.

An executioner, toying with his axe, stood by the side of the block.

"Off with it!" called "The False Prophet," laughingly. The soldier lifted the nude, insensible form of the beautiful girl so that her neck rested in the hollow of the block. He held her in position. The axe fell. The head rolled to the stone pave. A woman close by, caught the head by the hair, twisted her fingers well into the beautiful black swathes, and swinging the gory thing around her head, let it fly from her hand, shouting, as it hurled through the air.

"A kick-off, for the first team!"

The mob, among whom the head fell, began to play football with it. A moment later, the head of Isaac Wolfenstein rolled to the pavement, and a second woman caught that and hurled it over the heads of the people in the opposite direction to that in which Miriam's head had gone.

"A kick-off," shouted the hurler of the head, "for the second team." *

** May GOD arouse readers of this scene to reflect that there must be thousands living to-day, who will suffer thus hideously. Come, too, who to-day are members of churches, others, children of Christian Parents, many too, of the "Almost persuaded" among us.*

* * * *

This effort to trace Cohen and the fugitives had failed, but the knowledge soon came in, in four or five different ways. One of the wireless messages had brought a clue. Some traders brought in a fuller clue, and rapidly other news came to hand.

It soon became perfectly clear that there existed some kind of evident understanding between the various fleeing crowds, and that their first place of united meeting was to be one of the agricultural colonies near to the old Kadesh-Barnea.

By this time the fugitives had had four good days start. Apleon ordered an enormous body of troops to go in pursuit, and to slay or capture the fugitives - capture, by preference, that they might be publicly tortured and beheaded.

Mad with the lust for blood, and that fouler lust of Religious revenge, the pursuing host sped southwards. The wondrous new motor-trains, that would career over hillocks easier than a thoroughbred hunter gallops over a turfy down, carried the expedition. There were a hundred trains of thirty cars each, besides a thousand or more single Motor-Cars, carrying from twelve to twenty persons. Worked on the then latest principle, ether-driven - the cars and trains swept onward at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. Over head, travelling at the same rate, was a fleet of aerial war-ships, armed with infernal torpedoes, that if dropped into any town or community, would wipe out every living soul, and destroy the stoutest city, in a few minutes.

It looked as though the devoted band of Jews and Gentiles who had fled south were doomed.

Wild, exultant shouts of ironical laughter and unholy glee burst from the land and aerial pursuers, as they came within a moment or two (at their rate of travelling) of the fugitives.

The latter had seen them, heard them, and, as a body, were bowed in prayer for - . They scarcely knew what to ask, for deliverance or for fortitude, so that the essence of their prayer was "undertake for us, Lord!"

The sky lowered over their heads. They thought it Was the aerial fleet hiding the sun - but the winged warriors were not quite come up over their place of gathering.

The prostrate refugees remained, to a man, upon their faces. Souls in direct dealing with GOD have no curiosity as to outside events.

Suddenly, like the hiss of ten thousand times ten thousand snakes, a rushing sibilation passed through the momentarily darkened air. At the same instant the earth trembled, and there was an awful, thunderous fumbling in the nether world.

Simultaneous with both of these phenomena there came yells and screams, then, - anon - silence.

The mass of refugees raised themselves, and stood silent with awe and thankfulness. Sheets of flame had rushed out of the heavens, overwhelmed the aerial fleet of vengeful pursuers, fired the vessels, and hurled men and machines downwards into a mighty gulf. For the trembling, and thundering of the earth had been the result and accompaniments of a terrible earth-quake, that now swallowed up the whole pursuing host - land and aerial, alike.

For a moment or two no sound came from the mighty crowd of miraculously-delivered refugees. Then, suddenly, one of the late priests of the Temple, a chorister-priest, burst into song:

"Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God . . . My father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a Man of war: the Lord is His name. Our enemies chariots and his host hath He cast into the earth . . . Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord; dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee,. Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them."

Almost in the instant of the starting of the song, thousands of Jews, (and Gentiles, as well) had recognized the Red Sea Triumph Song, and had joined the voice of the leader. What a swell of triumph it was! On, on they sang:

"The enemy said: I will pursue, I will overtake; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, and my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with Thy wind, and they were destroyed.

"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gods! Who is like Thee, glorious in Holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders - Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone, till Thy people, O Lewd, till the people pass over, whom Thou hast purchased.

"Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

Three times over, led by the impromptu priest-presenter, that grateful, jubilant, delivered people sang the last sentence.

Then, as their song of praise finished, the leaders took counsel together as to what they should do next. It was the unanimous feeling, and expressed opinion, that Apleon would send forth other expeditions to destroy them, if he learned that they had escaped the fate of his aerial and land pursuit.

"I do not believe," cried Cohen, the chief spokesman among the Jews, "that GOD has permitted one of our pursuers to escape. GOD's judgments, like His mercies, are full and complete. Will Apleon, the Traitor to his covenant-word, ever know the fate of our pursuers? I believe not, unless anyone of us here retrace his steps to Jerusalem to tell him, and that would mean public torture and death to the tale-bearer."

He paused, and glanced around on the throng nearest to him, as he asked:

"Does anyone present know anything in the Scriptures relating to this present position, that will serve as a guide to our movements now?"

A tall, fine-looking man responded by lifting his right arm. He was asked to speak. He came forward and stood upon the hillock where Cohen stood. Holding aloft a Bible, he cried:

“Men and Brethren, of the stock of Israel, and Gentiles associated with them. I was a Christian minister, so-called, in Australia, when the 'Rapture' took place. I was left behind, because, though I could preach eloquently enough, and could keep my church filled to overflowing. I was not a converted man; I had been trained for the church, as my only brother had been trained for the bar. I never realized the need of conversion, my soul was filled with pride in my gifts, hence I was left behind when CHRIST came for His own, - and, among His own, thank GOD, were many **'Israelites indeed,'** as well as Gentiles.

"Since my conversion, friends, (and though too late for the Rapture, yet still the glorious event took place within forty-eight hours of the Rapture) I have studied my Bible, to see what should happen. Everything has happened according as the New Testament has laid it down: The **'people of God,'** the Jews, have built their Temple. They made their seven-year covenant with Apleon. The Antichrist, the Scripture calls him. At the end of the three and a half years (half of the covenant time) he orders the Sacrifice to cease in the Temple at Jerusalem - and everybody here knows how literally all this has happened.

"He has set up his own image to be worshipped, as was foretold, and GOD's ancient people, with those of us here who are Gentiles, have fled. We are here, to-day, here at this moment, living out exactly what the New Testament had all along prophesied would come to pass. In that wonderful book, which deals with these times in which we are now living, - Revelation twelve, it says, that the faithful Jews, and others, **'were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time,** (three and a half years from now) **from the face of the serpent.'** Friends, which period will complete the seven years of Apleon's (Antichrist's) reign.

"Now listen again to that same prophesy, friends: **'And the Serpent (Apleon) cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after** (the fugitives, us who are here today) **that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped** (the fugitives) **and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.'** Has not every item of this been actually fulfilled, has not GOD opened the earth and swallowed up the flood, and delivered us? Then that wonderful prophecy goes on:

'And the woman (the fugitives) **fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand and threescore days.** (three and a half years).

"I do not pose as a prophet, friends, but I cannot help thinking from all I read, some of which I have quoted to you, that GOD's mind for us is that we should make our way into the wilderness beyond here, where GOD's people of old time went, after GOD had swallowed up Pharaoh's hosts, even as He has just swallowed up Apleon's hosts.

“For, did you notice, in the word I quoted to you just now, it not only said **'the wilderness,'** but **'her place.'** It was the wilderness yonder there-“

He pointed Southwards with his finger. "In Sinai; where Moses fled from the wrath of Pharaoh; where Israel fled when pursued by the Egyptians; where Elijah fled from bloody Jezebel, and where, again and again, GOD's people have found shelter, so that GOD calls it '**her place**.' It comes to me, as I speak thus, that since Apleon's attempt to destroy us has failed, (whether he will learn that, or not, he will know that his punitive expedition does not return to him) his rage will be fixed against all, in every part of the world, who will not worship him, and his image. So that the persecuted ones, in each land, against whom his rage shall blaze, will probably flee to some wilderness in their own land, while thousands of those who cannot flee will meet martyrdom.

"But wheresoever the wilderness shall be, whether down there in Sinai, or in that vast desert in my wonderful land of Australia, or in one or other of America's deserts, or the desert of whatever land it may be, GOD will, I believe, miraculously feed, as He miraculously fed the fugitive millions of Israel with manna, and fed Elijah with food from Heaven by ravens. He could send 'manna' again, or any other food he pleased. Or he could as readily feed if he pleased, with one meal to last the three and a half years, as he could make his servants of old (go in the strength of one meal for forty days.' "

There was a little more in this strain, then there followed a kind of general conference upon the matter in hand. The whole thing was too serious to be delayed, or trifled with, and, eventually, it was agreed to travel as swiftly as might be to the "**Wilderness of Sinai**," where waiting upon GOD, they would hope to be directed in any future movement, or be sustained by his wonder-working hand.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
