

The Divine Hand

"Suddenly, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace..."—Daniel 5:5

During my recent six-month "sabbatical" from writing, I've had opportunities to put my hands to use in many other ways. Painting a bathroom...playing the piano...placing photos in a scrapbook...typing data into a computer—all rewarding activities. We use our hands in countless endeavors, but it is good to frequently stop and consider whether we are using them in God's service, or merely for our own purposes. One of my regular prayers is that God would flow through me and use my hands for His glory. I pray this particularly as I am writing, because writing can be such a powerful tool for communicating information.

Of course, the most powerful "communication tool" is the Word of God, written by His Spirit through the hands of His prophets and apostles in the Old and New Testaments. But in Daniel 5:5, we catch a glimpse of the Divine Hand itself, spelling out an urgent message to a very startled king! Take a moment to read through Daniel 5, and soak in the details of the vivid scene that is described. What was the point of the "handwriting on the wall", and why did God choose that method of communicating with Belshazzar?

1. **Belshazzar had used *his* hands for evil.**

He was holding in his hand the sacred goblets from the temple in Jerusalem. Taking that which was set apart for holy use and showing complete disregard for the things of God, he was using them for a drunken party.

2. **Belshazzar worshiped gods that were made by human hands.**

He attributed divine powers to lifeless objects, praising gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone (v.4)—mere forms of "divinity" that were in actuality rooted in humanity.

3. **God used the form of a human hand to communicate *true* divine power.**

Why did He use a hand? Other messages from God to evil kings came through prophets, dreams, and visions. Perhaps because Belshazzar attributed all that he saw and worshipped to the power of his own hand, God chose to show him in a dramatic way that there is a Sovereign Hand that orders our lives. In contrast to that which Belshazzar worshipped, God showed him a form of humanity that was rooted in the Divine.

Belshazzar's life was held in God's hand, and that hand was lifted up in judgment against him. Even in judgment, however, the hand of God showed mercy by sending him this warning and allowing him time for repentance.

As Daniel said, it is "God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways" (v. 23). If we honor Him with our lives and with the work of our hands, His hand is protective towards us. Isaiah tells us that He has engraved His people on the palms of His hand (49:16) and that He holds and carries us throughout the seasons of our lives (46:3-4). In John 10:28, God says of His children that "no one can snatch them out of My hand." The Divine Hand beckons us to come and humbly surrender to Him, so that He can write His own story on the pages of our lives.

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