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"THE FINGER OF GOD"

Exodus 8:19

"Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.'"

Did you ever think about God having fingers? It is an interesting subject and one that is very informative as we study the Person of God as revealed in human anatomical terms. Every revelation of God to mankind should arrest our attention and capture our sanctified inquisitiveness.

Bible students who know God, are aware that all such references to God using human terms, are simply accommodative language - anthropomorphisms (man forms) - in which the Scriptures provide humans with a reference point for relating to God's activity. The Bible clearly teaches that God is spirit - not physical (John 4:24). He does not possess physical mass. Jesus Himself stated, *"a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have"* (Luke 24:39; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50).

To know God better should be the desire of every one of His children. Paul set a good example for us when he said, *"That I may know him...."* (Philippians 3:10) May it be our passion while on earth to know Him better, whom we shall some day meet face to face.

Human terms are used throughout Scripture to describe God. One of those unusual terms is reference to the fingers of God. The explanation given to Pharaoh by the ungodly, heathen magicians for the plagues that harassed the Egyptians, was that they were the result of the finger of God's judgment. The complete verse reads as follows, *"Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.'" But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.*" (Exodus 8:19)

Steeped in superstition, the Egyptian magicians reluctantly attributed the plagues that they experienced as the finger work of deity. They did not believe in Jehovah. Yet by saying what they did they must have concluded that the deity who could bring about such widespread havoc with his fingers must indeed be great. The statement in Exodus 8:19 was the result of unenlightened heathen magicians.

However, we have recorded in the Bible four instances where God personally wrote something with His finger. Each one deserves our special attention and has an important message for us.

WITH HIS FINGERS HE CREATED THE HEAVENS

Psalm 8:3

*"When I consider Your heavens, **the work of Your fingers**, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You*

visit him?"

Charles Gore, an English theologian and Anglican bishop, said, "Nature is a first volume, in itself incomplete, and demanding a second volume, which is Christ." Indeed, God's handiwork, the work of His fingers as displayed in the heavens, is a volume that, although so very obvious, is nevertheless, ignored by most dwellers upon earth. The message written for all to see declares that God exists and that He is powerful, wise and benevolent.

David, in Psalm 19 says that the heavens themselves send a message from God to mankind: *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."* (Psalm 19:1-4)

Paul writes about the message that God has written in nature saying, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead"* and concludes, *"so that they are without excuse."* (Romans 1:20)

WITH HIS FINGERS HE CARVED HIS LAW ON TABLES OF STONE

Exodus 31:18

Exodus chapter 31 recounts the reception of the 10 Commandments given by God upon Mount Sinai: *"And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, **He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."***

Again in Deuteronomy chapter 9 Moses, speaking to the congregation of Israel, said, *"When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water. Then **the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God**, and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly."* (Deuteronomy 9:9-10)

I have heard of speakers say that God spoke to Moses the Commandments and Moses then used a hammer and chisel to carve them in the stone slabs. No so! God, delivered the Commandments to Moses in written form – written with His finger!

The content of The Commandments.

Recorded in Exodus chapter 20 are the following Commandments:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." (Exodus 20:3-17)

Referring to the stone tablets upon which were the Commandments, Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians saying, *"you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."* (II Cor. 3:3)

The message on stony tablets was a message of Law: "You shall" and "You shall not" – which letter kills. The message written by the Holy Spirit in our hearts and which is to be lived out in our lives, being known and read of all, is the message of love and life for *"the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."* (II Cor. 3:6)

Paul reminded the Corinthian church that *"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."* (2 Cor. 3:2,3) We, too, are God's living message in shoe leather. What about God do people read in our lives? Are we an accurate translation of God's message to mankind?

The intent of The Commandments.

Why the Commandments? Two principle reasons:

A. To bring to us a knowledge of sin.

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:19-20)

Since *"by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified"* (Romans 3:20a) and *"by the law is the knowledge of sin"* (Romans 3:20b), the Law was a measuring rod to show us how far short we fall of what God expects of us. We have all *"sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23)

B. To bring us to Christ.

"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." (Galatians 3:24,25)

The Law showed us the impossibility of saving ourselves and pointed us to Christ Who could save us. He fulfilled all the demands of the Law for us. As the gospel song states: "Free from

the Law, O happy condition, Jesus had bled and there is remission; cursed by the Law and bruised by the Fall, Christ has redeemed us once for all.”

WITH HIS FINGERS HE COMPOSED A MESSAGE ON BELSHAZZAR’S WALL

Daniel 5:5-6

*“In the same hour the **fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote** opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.”*

Daniel, along with a band of young men, had been captured and carried away from Israel into servitude in Babylon. Daniel distinguished himself by his holy living and God-given ability to interpret dreams. When the wicked ruler Belshazzar held a feast and desecrated the holy vessels that had been taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, God wrote his death sentence upon the wall of the banquet hall.

Daniel, who was the only one qualified to read God’s handwriting, was sent for and said, *“I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.”* (Daniel 5:17) But before Daniel read the handwriting upon the wall, he said to the King, *“The God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him.”* (Daniel 5:233-24)

Then he read God’s handwriting saying, *“God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”* (Daniel 5:26-28)

As a post-script, Daniel chapter 5 adds, *“That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom.”* (Daniel 5:30, 31)

God does not leave Himself without a witness. He speaks through cataclysmic events, like the plagues in Egypt; through His prophets, by personally writing His messages as seen in the Commandments and on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace. He does this because He is the living God Who created us and desires to communicate with us.

WITH HIS FINGERS JESUS COMMUNICATED ON THE TEMPLE PAVEMENT

John 8:3-11

*“Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But **Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger**, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the*

woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

This is the only record that we have of Jesus writing anything. We never find that He wrote any thing before or after this. Some early manuscripts do not include John 7:53 - 8:11. Augustine wrote about verse 8 as follows: "John 8:11 was omitted from many ancient manuscripts for fear that it would teach immorality."

There are many questions about this passage of Scripture. Why this unusual and strange response of Jesus to the accusation of the scribes and Pharisees? They brought the woman but where was the man?

What did Jesus write in the dust of the Temple floor?

(That He was in the Temple or at least in the Temple Court, as the NIV translates John 8:2 – *"At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts..."*, is clear. *"Wrote on the ground"* means *"wrote on the pavement."*)

There is no definitive answer. However, some of the speculations are as follows:

1. Some have said that Jesus wrote the sins of the woman's accusers. Therefore, being convicted, they departed for they were not without sin.
2. Others have suggested, as did John Gill that "It could be that Christ was writing their names."
3. One writer said that since the scribes and Pharisees represented Law, Jesus wrote "Grace."
4. Others have said that he was "scribbling" with his finger in the dust upon the floor until the woman's accusers departed, as if He was preoccupied with something else. Thereby, He would have been ignoring them or showing contempt for them. Verses 6 and 7 might suggest that, for we read, *"as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him...."*

There are many conjectures concerning what our Jesus wrote. Why He wrote and what He wrote on this occasion we do not know. Any attempt to discover what He wrote is useless speculation. When we read this story it is good to remember that there is no illumination in speculation!

What are some lessons we can take from this story?

1. Adultery is sin.
2. Jesus, no doubt, forgave the woman.
3. Forgiven ones should leave their sinful lifestyle.

4. No stone-throwing by anyone who has sinned!

Summation

God has given us messages in various forms:

- There is the message written in Creation, in His worlds;
- There is the message written in Revelation, the message written in His Word;
- There is the message written in Incarnation, the message written in The Word, Christ Jesus. (John 1:1)

God's writings are intended to give us information about Himself and about ourselves *and* to extend to us an invitation to trust the One Whose hands were nailed to the cross for our sins. Keep in mind that He also wrote:

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Hebrews 10:31

Conclusion

From September 1, 1998 through November 30, 1998 an award winning advertising campaign was created by The Smith Agency of Ft. Lauderdale for an anonymous donor. It used eighteen different messages, all "signed by God" which appeared on billboards throughout South Florida and on sides of 100 buses. Some of the "Messages from God" were:

- Let's Meet At My House Sunday Before The Game. – God
- What Part of "Thou Shalt Not..." Didn't You Understand? – God
- We Need To Talk. – God
- That "Love Thy Neighbor" Thing, I Meant It. – God
- Will The Road You're On Get You To My Place? – God
- Big Bang Theory, You've Got To Be Kidding. – God
- You Think It's Hot Here? – God
- Need A Marriage Counselor? I'm Available. – God
- Have You Read My #1 Best Seller? There Will Be A Test. – God

God has written His messages to mankind on stone slabs, walls, in the heavens and in His Book. Have you read His messages? Have you heeded His warnings? Have you responded to His wooing?