



BELSHAZZAR *the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. ² Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. ³ Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. ⁴ They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. ⁵ In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. ⁶ Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. (Daniel 5:1-6)*

Physiologically speaking, the hand is probably the most important part of the body, second only to the brain, that differentiates man from beast. The hand is wonderfully engineered to perform tasks that cannot be achieved by any other in the animal kingdom. The hand enforces the commands of the mind in accomplishing whatever work is desired.. Most often when Scripture refers to the hand, it includes the arm as well as the palm and fingers. There are thirty-two bones in the hand from the shoulder to the tips of the fingers. These are intricately woven together by ligaments and tendons which allow practically universal movement. Nerves and muscles are also included with ingenious design to allow for eating, fishing, hunting, writing, and a million other things.

The right hand is our hand of authority, and it is this hand with which we swear national allegiance. It is also the hand to which we vow to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth while the left hand rests upon the Holy Bible. The Right Hand also symbolizes the power and authority of Almighty God. We may lead a rich life without our hands, but our freedom of accomplishing many tasks would be adversely limited. It is this right hand in which the Seal of God, or the Mark of the Beast is spiritually imprinted – to obey God or Satan!

I will relate a story involving hands I heard as a boy concerning the great artist, Albrecht Durer, of Germany. Albrecht came from a family of fourteen. The father was not wealthy and found it difficult to put food on the table. Albrecht had an older brother named Albert. Both boys aspired to become artists, but there was no source of income to afford the schooling. So, when the boys were of sufficient age to attend university, they decided upon a plan to enable both to attend art school in nearby Nuremberg. They would toss a coin. The winner would go to art school first while the other worked in the nearby mines. Once the first brother graduated, he would then work to pay for his brother's schooling.

One Sunday morning, the young men tossed the coin. Albrecht won the toss and left for Nuremberg while his older brother, Albert, headed for the mines. During his stay at the art academy, Albrecht excelled beyond his teachers in art. He became quite well known even before he finally graduated four years later. Upon graduation, he headed back to his family in the village where he was raised. The proud father put on a feast at which the whole family was present. Albrecht was now able to ease the financial burdens of the family with his new found wealth.

As they sat at table, the father proposed a toast to the success of the younger son, Albrecht. Every family member proudly raised the glass except the older brother who had worked these past years in the mines. Albrecht took notice of this failure to lift the glass and feared his brother might have become bitter at his success. He went to the end of the table where his brother, Albert, was seated and said, Well, brother, now it is your turn to go to art school while I pay your expenses. With tears in his eyes, the older brother responded, No, Albrecht, it is too late for me to go to art school. After four years of working in the mines, my hands have been broken and ruined, and he held up his hands with crooked and deformed fingers. I could not even hold the glass up to toast to your success. Albrecht was overcome with sorrow at that news. He later did a famous pencil drawing in 1508 entitled, Praying Hands. A copy of that drawing was commonly displayed in most American homes when I was a youngster. It is currently on display in the Albertina Museum in Vienna. It is often referred to as the Hands of the Apostle, but tradition avers that these are symbols of the brother's hands that labored so that Albrecht could finish art school.

God has Hands, too. The Hand of God symbolizes His Sovereignty and Power. There was long ago another feast at which men were raising their drinks to toast the king. It was in Babylon at a great drunken feast of Belshazzar. He ordered the golden, consecrated vessels which were taken from the Temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to serve as vessels from which he and his concubines drank. Suddenly, *In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.* Like a multitude of egregious sinners of our day, Belshazzar had sinned to the point of reprobation. Later, Daniel the prophet interpreted the words, *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* to mean: *MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PÉRES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.* (Daniel 5:26-29) That selfsame day was Babylon fallen and Belshazzar slain.

Have you ever wondered why Belshazzar named Daniel the Third Ruler in the Kingdom instead of the Second? This has been a cause for historians to disclaim Daniel as an inspired book since there was 1) no record of Belshazzar as king, and 2) if Belshazzar was king, it would be proper for him to have named Daniel the second ruler of the kingdom. But that disclaimer has been reduced to ruins in 1849.

In 1849, for instance, Sir Austen Henry Layard discovered the ruins of Nineveh and Sennacherib's 'Palace Without Rival'. Other important archaeological discoveries made in Nineveh include the famous 'Library of Ashurbanipal', and the palaces of several Assyrian kings. It was in the ruins of the library in which thousands of clay tablets were unearthed that a record made by King Nabonidas was discovered which read: *I am Nabonidas, King of Babylon. I am visiting in Nineveh and have left my son, Belshazzar, as king in my stead.* This is the reason that Daniel could only be named the THIRD ruler of Babylon because Belshazzar was temporary king in his father's stead. Therefore, Belshazzar was the second ruler and could only name Daniel as THIRD.. Many of the modern, so-called higher critics have overlooked this bit of historical revelation and adhere to the former falsehood that the Book of Daniel is not Canonical.

God has a powerful Hand. He is our Maker and He holds our lives, moment-by-moment, in His Hand. *But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.* (Isaiah 64:8) God's Hand is a mighty Hand that shaped the worlds and cast the stars into their orbits. *Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.*

There is another Hand of God that appears, in some ways, like that deformed hand of the brother of Albrecht Durer – it is the nail-scarred Hand of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. With that Hand, He purchased our redemption, and in the palms of those Hands were the names of His Elect graven as with a chisel forevermore. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, **I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;** thy walls are continually before me.* (Isaiah 49:15-16)

At the time of Isaiah's writing (700 BC) it was unfathomable a mother would be so heartless as to forget, or even kill, her baby, but it has become an evil and wicked practice of our day due to a failure of love and compassion; however, our Lord has not forgotten nor forsaken us. He remembered us even from the cross at Calvary – our names were grafted into the palms of His Hands