

The Finger of God Daniel 5:1-30 Counter Culture

(The Excavations at Babylon [London: MacMillan, 1914], pp. 88-89, 103-4).

Daniel Ch. 5 is one of those Stories that unless it was in the Bible –you would never believe it!

A) Nearly 25 years have passed since the events of chapter 4 and over 70 years since chapter 1.

B) Daniel now advanced in years, is a senior statesman in Babylon.

C) Nebuchadnezzar is gone and Belshazzar is now King in Babylon the last of the Chaldean kings of Babylon,

D) He is **Approximately thirty-six years old** at the time of Daniel 5, Belshazzar was decadent, depraved, idolatrous, and unworthy to rule.

RD V.1-4

Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. ² While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which *had been* in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which *had been* in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

So Belshazzar throws a party for 1,000 of his lords and their wives – possible 2,000 people there.

The archaeologist Robert Koldewey, during his excavation of the **palace of Babylon** from the time of Belshazzar, found a large room, fifty-five feet wide and one hundred sixty-nine feet long with plaster walls — a significant detail that fits with the biblical record.

At the end of the room was a niche in the wall where he believed the king sat so he would be elevated before the people

A) They are getting smashed – decide to defile the God of the Hebrews – bring the temple vessels
God Suddenly **interrupts the party** in dramatic fashion AWESOME!!!!

⁵ 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. {Tripping} ⁶ 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. {Wet himself} ⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise *men* of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and *have* a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

⁸ Now all the king's wise *men* came, but they **could not** read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. ⁹ Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

¹⁰ The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom **in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God.** And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. ¹² Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

I pause here to point out

A) Daniel wasn't invited to the party!

B) When the world throws a wild party, the children of God are not invited.

1) We don't fit in and our values would just be a nuisance when the world wants to party.

C) But let a marriage break up, or let cancer hit, or let the children get in trouble, or the career hits rock bottom - **who do they call? A CHRISTIAN**

Daniel wasn't invited to the party, but when God **CRASHES the party** and no one had the answer, **Daniel is the one man the king wants to hear from.**

A) We may never know our influence until a crisis comes.

B) **Personal encouragement!** You may be stuck in an office or a classroom or a factory or a neighborhood or a family gathering where you are the only Christian.

D) And you may feel overlooked and taken for granted, or possibly ridiculed and misunderstood.

1) Hang in there: **God is setting you up to be used!**

¹³ Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"

¹⁴ **I have heard of you**, that the Spirit of God *is* in you, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.

¹⁵ Now the wise *men*, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. ¹⁶ And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and *have* a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

¹⁷ Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, "**Let your gifts be for yourself**, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

Daniel in his older age is getting a little more blunt in his old age. – **I get the impression he doesn't like Belshazzar too much**

A) He doesn't treat him with the same kind of respect as he did Nebuchadnezzar - More direct

B) Remember last week – **I wish this was for your enemies – Saddened for Nebuchadnezzar.**

C) Now he says - **Keep your gifts** – here is the deal.

1) I can relate to this: Hopefully in my older age becoming more like Jesus

D) But I am becoming less patient with rebellion and foolish behavior. More BLUNT – Jesus was too

¹⁸ O king, the Most High God **gave** Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. **{God gives kings power}**¹⁹ And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down.

Well known fact that King Nebuchadnezzar was a hard man – he was feared – he could fly off the handle.

²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was **hardened in pride**, **{Pride does harden our hearts}**

he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. ²¹ Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body **was wet with the dew of heaven**, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.

²² "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, **although you knew all this {know better}**

²³ And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and

stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.²⁴ Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

²⁵“And this is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

²⁶This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; ²⁸PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Talk about ruining the party!

²⁹Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom- ³⁰That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. ³¹And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Amazing story – Babylon was brought down in one night. –

A)Weighed in the balances and found wanting!

B)This is the indictment against Belshazzar!

1)He hasn't learned from the Past- AND because he hasn't learned from the past –

2)He is unable to interpret the present

C)And because he is unable to interpret the present He is NOT PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE!

He didn't learn the lessons of the Past:V. 18-22

A)Daniel says: You knew what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar – how he exalted himself – how humbled!

B)And after he regained his sanity – He praised and worshipped the Most High God as the one true God!

C)You knew this: and yet you act this way – You blaspheme God – Defiling the Temple vessels!

1)Are you out of your Mind?

So because of his failure to learn the lessons of the past.

A)He is unable to interpret the present –

B)Daniel says: V. 23 Knowing what you know - you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them, you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know;

C)That was his committed sin - & his sin of omission;

and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.

Failure to learn the lessons of the past led to his not being able to interpret the present which led to -

A)HE WAS NOT READY FOR THE FUTURE!

B)You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting!

C)That is a heavy statement – that reveals to us that from God's perspective, life is like a Scale.

1)Men and women are being measured.

D)Are you ready – for the day that your life is going to be put on the scale?

1)Rich Farmer – He thought he had it all going for him.... Tonight soul required – not rich toward God!

Now this is not the only time that the finger of God was seen or felt on an occasion

A)The First time we read of the finger of God is in Exodus Ch. 8

B)Moses – Came with a message from God – Let my people go?

C)Pharaoh refused - God sends a series of plagues on the Egyptians because Pharaoh will not let the people go

First plague – turns the Nile river – their life source into blood. Fish died / it stank

A)Pharaoh's magicians couldn't reverse it - but they could duplicate it – turned another water source to blood

B) Took Pharaoh 7 days to ask Moses to change it
1) Talk about Stubborn

B) **2nd Plague: Frogs** – again they duplicated it {
If I am Pharaoh – I shoot those guys -

C) Frogs everywhere – Take it away ! When ?
tomorrow

1) One more night with the frogs

D) One more night with the stomach flu –

1) One more night with my sin! SAD

3RD PLAGUE LICE

A) The interesting thing about this plague is that the Egyptians **HATED** lice

B) Remember, they deified almost every living thing around them {BUT - not lice}

C) Lice were hated by the Egyptians So much so that the ancient historian, Herodotus, tells us:

“The priests of Egypt would shave their entire body from head to toe every-other day in order to keep lice from infesting them and thus protect themselves from the pollution of lice.” Herodotus

D) Pharaoh’s magicians and Astrologers couldn’t take away the lice – couldn’t copy it

E) And When they were unsuccessful, they said to Pharaoh - Exodus 8:19 **This is the finger of God!**

But When Pharaoh heard this proclamation from HIS OWN magicians, we are told Pharaoh's heart grew hard, & he didn't heed them,

A) He wouldn't respond to it

B) **THE FINGER OF GOD** was pointing to the Egyptians and they DID NOT respond to it

C) Found guilty – condemned !

The SECOND time that we read of the finger of God is in Exodus 31:18

“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.”

B) **God's finger wrote the very commandments** that Moses came down with from Mt. Sinai

C) It is the commandments that are written with the **FINGER OF GOD** that point at you **and me in judgement**

D) You see, man has this false idea that he is really pretty good

1) That we **are all basically O.K.** and will make it into heaven as long as we don't blow it too badly

D) God gave the Law.... **written with His own finger....** to dispel the idea that we are righteous enough to make it into heaven

Romans 3:19 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.

C) The law tells us that the only thing that weighs out is sinlessness!

1) That is the only way that we cannot be found wanting when God puts our life on the scales - Sinless

It is the Law of God which points the finger at you and me and says weighed found wanting!

A) **All have sinned and fallen Short of the glory of God!**

B) Galatians 3:24 “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

So we have three Old Testament instances of the FINGER OF GOD

A) The FINGER OF GOD in Egypt....

The FINGER OF GOD in Sinai...

The FINGER OF GOD in Babylon

B) In each of those the FINGER OF GOD related to JUDGEMENT

IN the NT we have a couple of other references to the Finger of God!

A) First in Luke 11: Where Jesus is seen casting a Demon out of a man that was deaf & dumb

B) But the Religious leaders who were Jealous of Jesus & His popularity

1) Accused Him of casting out Demons by the Power of Satan

C) Jesus refuted that accusation by basically saying that – would mean that Satan was Divided against himself – STUPID

D) Then Jesus made this statement: Luke 11: 20 "But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Now in that instance the finger of God is equated with His Power over Satan's forces & Demons

A) **I love that, Great – comfort** – We often think of Satan as such a strong one – Yet he can't withstand the finger of our God!!!!

My friends, you are no match for Satan, and when he wants to fight you just run to your elder Brother, who is more than a match for all the devils in hell.

-- D.L. Moody,

Stand strong in Power of his might

B) Power of the Gospel – Preaching of Christ

The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil. The preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all hell shake.

-- Charles Haddon Spurgeon,

There is ONE MORE instance in which we see the **FINGER OF GOD**

A) That is found in the John 8/ Story of a woman caught in adultery

B) So Jesus was in the temple court area teaching when

1) The Pharisees brought this woman to Jesus & said that she was caught in the very act of adultery/

John 8:5-6 "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

If they were so interested in righteous judgement, where was the man?

6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.

A) **Here was the Dilemma** - If Jesus said: *Stone her*"....

B) He would no longer be seen as gracious and merciful to the common people who enjoyed being around him.

C) Not Jesus – But If Jesus said: "*Let her go*"..... they would accuse Him of being a Law breaker and thus unholy

D) They thought that they had Him – (Inside they are high fiving

1) But Jesus didn't say a word

John 8:6b But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

Instead With His finger.... the **FINGER OF GOD** because He is God..... He began to write in the dust

John 8:7-8 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." 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

A) Now the Bible does not say What Jesus wrote, -

1) But from their reaction, it would seem very possible that Jesus was writing the names of the men holding stones,

B) and with each name perhaps he listed a time and a place and an act that they had done in violation of the Law of God - **FOR WE READ**

John 8:9 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.

C) Jesus then looked at the woman and said

John 8:10 "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

D) Jesus didn't deny her sin but he didn't condemn her either – exhorted her to go and sin no more

BE FREE

Note the contrast:

A) The *FINGER OF GOD* through Moses showed JUDGEMENT, but the *FINGER OF GOD* seen in Jesus Christ showed JOY

B) JESUS says to her – Go and sin no more! – You are free! {Don't have to live that way any more!}

1) Jesus knew he was going to the Cross – pay the Price for that sin –

C) Because – He was going to the cross – Sin Paid for

1) Because He would Rise – Power to walk in Freedom!

The Psalmist asked the Question in Psalm 24:3-4 "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart."

A) I don't know about you but I read that and I think that leaves me out! – I don't have clean hands or a pure heart – sinned!

B) On the other side of Calvary – that is the reaction of all of us! - Doomed

C) But on this side of Calvary: We can all say: I can!!

1) Not because I am perfect! – But because He is perfect

D) The Bible declares that at Calvary all my sin was transferred to Jesus

1) And when we put our faith in Him – All His righteousness is transferred to us!

On my own – Scales are out of whack!

A) My sin on one side – God's holiness on the other

I am greatly lacking

B) Add FAITH IN the Cross – my Sin is gone – Jesus righteousness added to my life –

1) Suddenly in that instant – My life is no longer lacking!

C) I am placed in Christ

1) All the weight of who He is and what He accomplished is added to us.

D) All of our failures are subtracted and put on the cross of Calvary.

The Bible exhorts us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling - Ephesians 4:1

1) Worthy is the idea of weight Scales & balances

B) Idea isn't so much that we are called a Christian – so we should act like it

C) But rather We have a calling ! Ephesians 1-3 is all about who you are in Christ – YOUR CALLING!

1) Let your walk be measured by that REALITY

Our Calling? Sons and Daughters of God

A) Partakers of a Heavenly calling

B) Partakers of a Divine Nature - New Nature - The Spirit of God is in You - Live like that –

C) Live like a person who KNOWS he belongs to God

D) Live like a person who knows – Christ is in them and they are in Christ

E) Live like a person who knows they are going to Heaven!

F) Live like a person who is learning how to respond to the Holy Spirit rather than react in the flesh!

JESUS SAID TO THE WOMAN – Go and sin no more

Says to us – Walk in a manner that weighs as much or resembles your CALLING IN CHRIST