WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING (Daniel 5)

LIVING FOR GOD | LIVING IN BABYLON

Nov 15, 2026 | Dave Geldart | Tru Community Church

1. **[1] INTRODUCTION: RECAP & CONTEXT**
    a. Everything so far in Daniel has been answering one question:
        i. How does a person live for God in a place that doesn't?
        ii. We watched teenagers stay faithful to God by turning down the king's menu,
            1. Then three friends faced a furnace and said, 'But even if he doesn't'
        iii. And last week we watched the most powerful man on earth lose his mind before finally humbling himself before God!
    b. Remember the statue from chapter 2?
        i. The golden head was Babylon, and God said it wouldn't endure …
        ii. Today the gold runs out.
        iii. Silver is already standing outside the gate.
    c. I want to take you back to the very first chapter, because Daniel 5 has been waiting for this since Daniel 1:2.
    d. [2] [Daniel 1:2] "And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god."
        i. **[TOUCH THE COMMUNION CUP]** Hold on to those cups.
        ii. Chapter 1 opens with them being carried into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.
        iii. Chapter 5 opens with them being carried out for a party by his successor – probably his grandson.
    e. Hold on to one more thing, too.
        i. Last week ended with Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledging God, humbling himself before him, and giving glory and praise to the true God of Israel!
        ii. And he didn't keep it a secret.
        iii. He shared his detailed testimony for the whole world to read.
        iv. And God preserved it for eternity, giving it a chapter in the very Bible itself
    f. [3] Today we're in Daniel Chapter 5.
        i. And the new king we meet grew up inside that story.
        ii. He knows all about everything we've studied so far
        iii. What he does with what he knows is what this sermon is about.
        iv. One king finished his story on his knees, praising.
        v. The other one didn't live to see the morning.

2. REJECTING GOD

a. It's been decades since the last chapter. Babylon has a new king.

b. [4] [Daniel 5:1-4] "King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone."

c. A thousand nobles. Wine flowing. Gold on every surface.

d. Here's what makes it stranger.

   i. Daniel doesn't mention it, but ancient historians like Herodotus tell us a Persian army was camped outside the city that night.

   ii. Babylon's walls were so massive that people believed nothing could get through them.

   iii. So the king throws the biggest party of his reign with an enemy parked outside.

   iv. Nobody does that unless they feel completely safe.

e. Anybody who's lived in Kansas knows this type.

   i. The siren's going, the sky's a color it shouldn't be, and somebody out on the patio is saying it'll miss us.

f. Now look at what he sends for.

   i. Of everything in that palace, he calls for the sacred cups they'd captured from the temple in Jerusalem.

      1. The sacred cups of the God who humbled his own family.
      2. Yahweh had commanded only his priests were allowed to even handle then. No one was allowed to drink from them.

   ii. This was chosen, on purpose, in front of a thousand witnesses.

3. THE WRITING ON THE WALL

a. The party's still going as we pick back up in verse 5:

b. [5] [Daniel 5:5-6] Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

c. Suddenly.

i. No trumpet. Just fingers,
    1. no arm, no body, writing in the light of the party's own lampstand.
ii. A thousand people go deathly quiet.

d. Belshazzar's terror makes sense beyond the freak-out seeing something ghostly
    i. He had decided the God of those cups was mere family folklore.
    ii. Then a supernatural hand shows up.
        1. And Belshazzar was terrified
        2. But nothing in the text indicates he was Sorry.
e. Instead he screams for his wise men and offers expensive purple clothes, a gold chain, and the third-highest seat in the kingdom to anyone who can interpret it.
f. Every specialist the empire could afford stands there with nothing.
    i. The words were ordinary ones, the vocabulary of weights and coins, but with no vowels and no context to say what they meant for him.
    ii. Human wisdom ran out of road.
    iii. And the best he can offer is more coins and the "third highest" in the Kingdom (because his father and co-ruler Nabonidus was away, ranked first, and Belshazzar himself was second).
g. Then the banquet hall doors open again.
    i. [6] [Daniel 5:10-12] "10 The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. 'May the king live forever!' she said. 'Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! 11 There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. …12 … Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.'"
h. She isn't one of the wives, since they're already in the room.
    i. Most likely she's the queen mother, and she remembers Daniel.
i. Look how much she has to explain.
    i. "There is a man in your kingdom."
    ii. The king has to be told who Daniel is.
    iii. He hardly knows the man who stands for the God he's been mocking all night.
j. Daniel is an old man by now, in his 80s, retired for years, forgotten by the palace.
    i. Not forgotten by her.

ii. Decades of quiet, steady living in one place, and on the worst night in the empire's history, one person's mind goes straight to him.

4. THE VERDICT

a. Daniel comes in, and the king does what kings do.
   i. He opens the wallet again
   ii. Daniel has been around kings for more than sixty years. He knows what they offer and what it costs.
   iii. [7] [Daniel 5:17] "Then Daniel answered the king, 'You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.'"

b. He turns down the pay, and then he does the job anyway.
   i. The message was never for sale, so the price can't change it.

c. Then he gives the king a history lesson:
   i. how God made Nebuchadnezzar the most feared man alive,
   ii. how pride hardened him,
   iii. and how he ended up in a field with the dew on him until he knew who ruled.
   iv. Daniel is reading a king his own family history, with the whole court listening.

d. And then comes the sentence this chapter turns on. Verse 22:
   i. [8] [Daniel 5:22-24] "But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription."

e. Hear the charge: "though you knew all this", you still rejected God, refusing to humble yourself or honor him.
   i. Ignorance isn't what he's accused of.
      1. That's why this story has become a common phrase for an OBVIOUS WARNING – The Writing On The Wall
   ii. Belshazzar had the story. He had the evidence.
   iii. He had the testimony of a man who'd gone to the bottom and come back with his mind and his worship restored.
   iv. It was clear to see.

v. And yet he consciously decided to do nothing with it.
    1. Even though every breath at that party was on loan.
    2. He drank from God's cups with God's air

f. If you're sitting here afraid you might be Belshazzar because you've got doubts, hear me.
    i. Doubt isn't the verdict. Honest questions aren't defiance.
    ii. Belshazzar wasn't wrestling with anything.
        1. He'd made up his mind, and raised a cup to it.

g. God doesn't ask anyone to jump in the dark.
    i. John tells us why he wrote his Gospel, chapter 20, verses 30 and 31:
    ii. [John 20:30-31] "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."
    iii. That's a case laid out on the table.
    iv. Biblical faith is a response to evidence.
        1. Not waiting for certainty that isn't possible
        2. But enough evidence to lead to a reasoned response of faith -- TRUST
    v. Which means turning the evidence down is a moral act, not a neutral one.
    vi. Belshazzar had everything he needed, and he chose the cup.

5. WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

a. Verse 25. Daniel reads the wall.
b. [9] [Daniel 5:25-28] "This is the inscription that was written: mene, mene, tekel, parsin. Here is what these words mean:
Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.
Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.
Peres *(the singular of Parsin)* : Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."
c. There's actually a lot of fun linguistics stuff going on here. These common words all had multiple meanings (they're all units of money, for example -- leading to the confusion over interpretation):
d. Daniel revealed they meant: Numbered, Numbered, weighed, divided.
    i. The word for "divided" *Peres* also could mean Persia!
        1. which I doubt is an accident
e. The middle word one is the one I want us sit with: A scale.

i. All night Belshazzar had been weighing God.
ii. He set the God of Jerusalem on one side and gold and silver and stone on the other, and decided the cups were good for drinking and nothing else.
iii. Now the scale swings around.
iv. God is evaluating the man, his worth and his values, by his own measure.
v. The king who thought he was the judge turns out to be the one on trial.

6. BABYLON FALLS

a. [10] [Daniel 5:29-31] "Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.
That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two."
b. The king keeps his word to the man who just announced his death, yet as Daniel knew, that title was worthless, because the whole kingdom ends before sunrise.
i. In 539 BC, historians record how the Persians diverted the Euphrates and walked into Babylon on the riverbed.
ii. Conquered it without even a fight, the King the only casualty.
iii. The golden head didn't endue forever, but gave way to the silver kingdom, exactly as God had said.
c. Two men in that room, with almost the same name.
i. Belshazzar and Belteshazzar (what Babylon called Daniel)
ii. Belshazzar means "Bel protect the king." Bel didn't.
iii. Daniel's true Hebrew name means "Yahweh is my judge."
iv. That night everyone found out who the judge was.

7. THE FINGER OF GOD

a. Go back to that hand writing on the wall
b. That finger has written before. Exodus 31:18:
i. [11] [Exodus 31:18] "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God."
c. The first time God's finger writes anything down, it's what he values.
i. It was set in stone, and it doesn't shift with anybody's opinion—even a king's
ii. Then the same finger writes on plaster in a palace, and a man who thought nothing was above him finds out something is.

d. Then it turns up in Jerusalem, with a woman standing in the middle of a circle.
    i. The religious leaders have dragged her in, caught in adultery.
    ii. They know the law, the writing of that finger, and they're using it as a trap.
    iii. Moses said stone her; what do you say?
    iv. John 8, verse 6:
    v. [12] [John 8:6b-11] "But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.
    At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'
    'No one, sir,' she said.
    'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'"
e. John doesn't say what he wrote.
    i. I wonder if he was writing out the sins of those watching.
    ii. The oldest leave first, which tells me they had the most to see.
    iii. And the woman stays.
    iv. She's no less guilty than she was five minutes ago, and everybody in that circle knows it, her included.
    v. She stays anyway.
    vi. Somewhere in that circle she's worked out that the one person with every right to throw a stone is the one standing between her and everyone else.
f. Have you ever had that experience?
    i. Where all you'd tried so hard to keep hidden comes out and others see you at your worst?
    ii. I think that's both the greatest human fear, and also its greatest desire.
        1. Fear of utter rejection and shame.
        2. Yet hoping against hope to be seen as we truly are, all of us -- the good and the bad -- and still be accepted. Loved.
    iii. I've had that kind of experience. Having my sin exposed felt like death in the moment, but by God's grace, being known like that and still loved changed my life.
g. Jesus doesn't wave the sin away.

i. "leave your life of sin" isn't a shrug.
ii. But "Neither do I condemn you" came from a man who knew where he was headed.
iii. The verdict on her sin didn't evaporate that day. It was on its way to him.

h. Jerusalem's powerful valued Jesus at zero. And they killed him accordingly.
i. But God raised him up, gave him a name above every name, and his kingdom has no last night.
ii. Belshazzar's lasted until morning.

i. And the finger is still writing.
i. Not on stone or plaster or sand now.
ii. Paul told the church at Corinth,
iii. [13] [2 Corinthians 3:3] "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."
iv. That's the fulfillment of the divine promise Jeremiah gave to exiles in Babylon,
v. [14] [Jeremiah 31:31,33-34] "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant … 33…I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. …34…they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

j. The finger that wrote the law, and then the verdict on the wall, now writes on people's hearts. → On you!

8. [15] APPLICATION: So what is he writing on you?

a. [16] What do you know about God that you aren't responding to?
i. Not what you doubt. What you know.
ii. Maybe it's the person you've been asked to forgive, and you keep rehearsing the case against them.
iii. Maybe it's something in your calendar or your bank account he's been asking you to loosen your grip on.
iv. Maybe it's bigger.
1. You've never made a decision about Jesus.
2. You've heard it for years, you think most of it is probably true, and you've kept it at arm's length, respectful and interested and uncommitted.

b. In your life, this almost never looks like Belshazzar's banquet. It looks like drift.

i. **[STORY: A few years ago, my car started pulling a little to the right.**
    1. **So I did what any responsible but busy car owner does: I ignored it.**
    2. **Got used to it. Even when it eventually started to shake.**
    3. **By the time I actually took it in waaaay later, what would have been a simple initial fix dominoed into a large repair bill.**
    4. **I never decided to break my car. I just kept not deciding.**
ii. Knowing and not responding isn't a neutral place to stand.
    1. It's a decision, even when it feels like waiting.
iii. [17] [Hebrews 3:15] "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts ...

c. Here's the good news in this chapter, though.
    i. Look at what Nebuchadnezzar's response was, Daniel 4, verse 34:
    ii. [18] [Daniel 4:34] "At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored."
    iii. He looked up. And humbled himself. That's where it began.
    iv. It didn't need to be polished.
    v. If you can say today, "God, I know, and I've been putting this off, but I want to trust you" you aren't Belshazzar.
    vi. You're at the start of a very different story.
d. And who around you has heard it all and hasn't answered?
    i. Somebody has watched you handle a hard season, a bad diagnosis, a Tuesday morning,
        1. and the night their own wall lights up, your name might be the one they say.
    ii. Pray for them by name this week. Invite them to church or deeper connection.
e. In a minute we're coming to the Communion Table. Before we do, take thirty seconds.
    i. At the bottom of your notes, Write one thing just between you and God:
        1. What you know from God that you've been putting off
        2. Or the name of someone you long to know Jesus
        3. **[Pause. Let the silence run 20 to 30 seconds.]**
    ii. Now rip it off, fold it, and in a minute, bring it with you as you come to the Table

9. COMMUNION

a. Belshazzar threw a feast.

i. A thousand guests, the best wine, and the Lord's cups raised to false gods that couldn't hear.

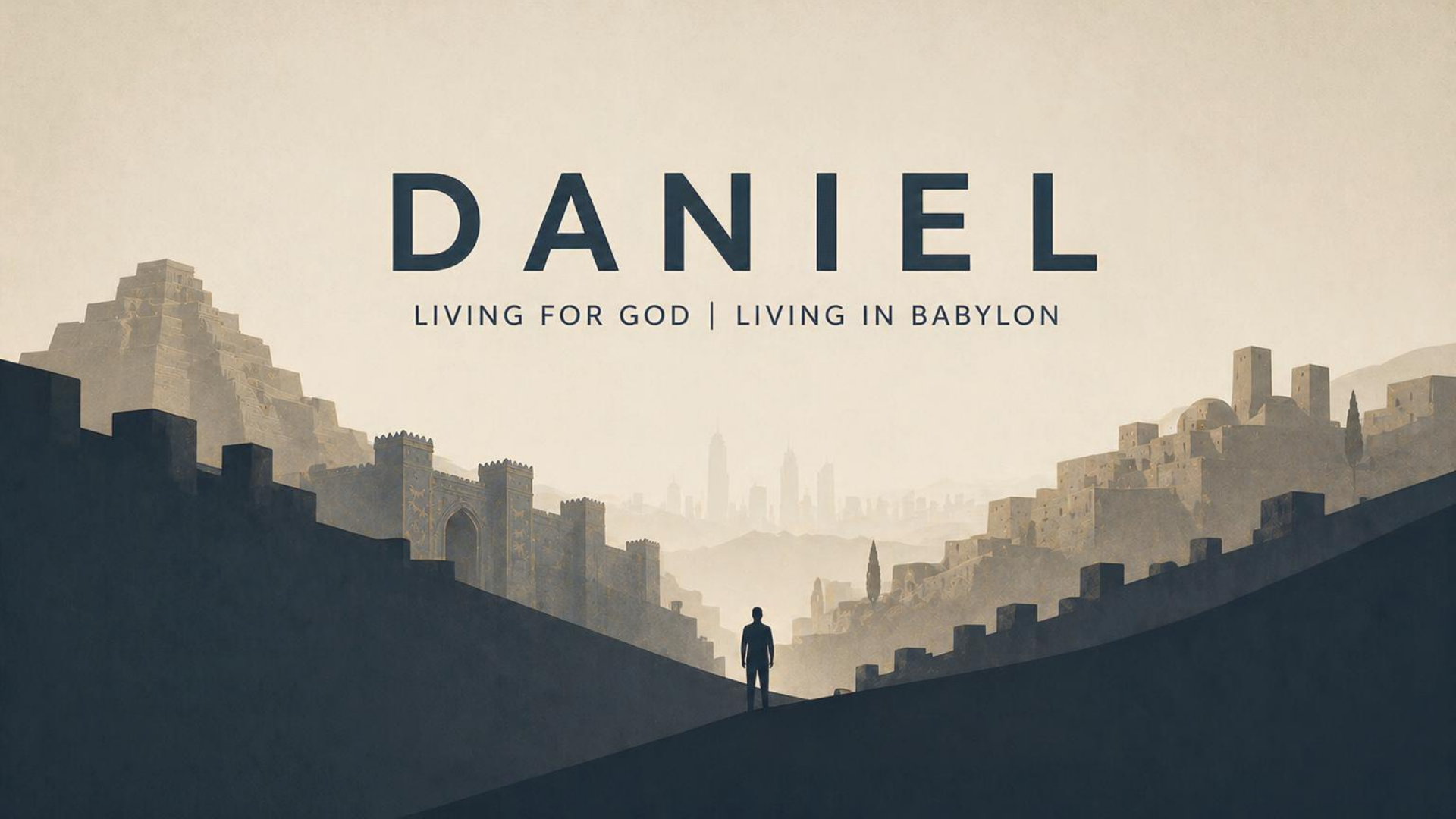
b. We have a table.
   i. It's plainer. Bread, a cup. [TOUCH COMMUNION CUP AND BREAD]
   ii. And the Host is the God whose cups Babylon stole.
   iii. [19] [Luke 22:19-20] "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'"

c. This is that new covenant Jeremiah promised, the law written on hearts.
   i. Belshazzar was weighed and found wanting. So was I. So were you.
   ii. This table doesn't pretend otherwise.
   iii. We don't come because we passed.
   iv. We come because someone stepped into the circle between us and the stones and took the verdict himself.
   v. [20] Weighed by God, covered in Christ.

d. So if you've been carrying something you know and haven't answered, come.
   i. He has already shown he doesn't throw stones.
   ii. If Jesus is your Lord, or you want him to be, this table is yours.

e. [Invite people to come get the elements. As they do, bring their card and leave it there in the baskets]

f. The finger that wrote the law and the verdict is still writing on human hearts.
   i. If you've placed your trust in Jesus, over you today it says two words:
   ii. [21] First is: FORGIVEN. Because of Jesus' body given for you.
      1. Let's celebrate that by eating the bread together.
   iii. [22] The second word is WELCOME.
      1. Because Jesus has purchased with his blood a new covenant between us and God, based not on our own merit, but on his.
      2. In gratitude for his grace that covers us, let's drink the cup together.


DANIEL
LIVING FOR GOD | LIVING IN BABYLON



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and put in the treasure house of his god.

DANIEL 1:2

WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

DANIEL 5



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THE FINGER OF GOD

EXODUS 31:18 When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.



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JOHN 8 6But Jesus bent down and started to **write** on the ground with his **finger**. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again he stooped down and **wrote** on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” 11 “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

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JEREMIAH 31 [31] The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant…[33b] I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. …[34b] they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

APPLICATION

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DANIEL 4:34 "At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored."

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LUKE 22 [19] And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” [20] In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.



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WEIGHED BY GOD, COVERED IN CHRIST

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WELCOME.