

With These Hands

Valley Center Seventh-Day Adventist Church
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Few structures of the human anatomy are as unique or complex as the hand. It is a marvel of engineering and design that we all too often take for granted! The hand needs to be mobile in order to position the fingers and thumb. The hand has to be strong to perform certain functions. The hand also must be coordinated to perform fine motor tasks with precision. The structures that form and move the hand require proper alignment and control in order for normal hand function to occur.

There are 27 bones within the wrist and hand. The wrist itself contains eight small bones, called [carpals](#). The bones, ligaments, joints, nerves, muscles, and blood vessels compose a fascinating study. There are medical doctors, called orthopedic hand specialists who are trained in injuries and maladies of the hand.

But today we're not studying the anatomy of the human hand, as interesting and fruitful as that might be. We want to spend a few minutes thinking about the "hand of the Lord." What can we learn about Him through a study of His "hand" as revealed in the Bible?

Creating Hands

Do you like to work with your hands? God does! In fact, one of the most overlooked characteristics of God is that He's "creative." There's something fulfilling and satisfying about designing, forming and creating with your hands, whether it's art on canvass, creating or playing a musical composition, crafting a special recipe or a construction project. God's hands are creative. We read, "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands." Psalm 102:25. "I made the

earth, and created man on it. It was I—My hands that stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded.” Isaiah 45:12. All that exists in the universe came from the creative, designing hand of God.

In a special way, God’s hands were used in the crowning act of His creation, Adam. The word “hand” is not in Genesis 2:7, but it is implicit in the description of Adam’s creation. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.”

Well, you might say, that applied to Adam there in the Garden of Eden, but not to others that are born since then. Not true! What does the Bible say? “But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.” Isaiah 64:8. What do we read in the book of Job? “Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity.” Job 10:8. The Lord told Jeremiah, “Before I formed (the same word as in Genesis 2:7) you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you.” Jeremiah 1:5. Each one of us represents God’s “handiwork.” He’s still forming mankind! Every single human life is a product of God’s hand just as was Adam.

The word for “hand” in the New Testament is the Greek word *cheir*, which shows up in our language in a couple of words. “Chiromancy” is another word for palmistry, a way of supposedly acquiring wisdom by the reading of the hand. A word more familiar to us is the word “chiropractor” (*cheiro* “hand” + *praxis* “work”), a branch of medicine that endeavors to bring healing through hand manipulations. God is the divine “Chiropractor.” He worked with His hands at creation, in the bringing forth of the heavens and earth, the myriad of creatures, and the ones created in His own likeness, Adam and Eve. His “handiwork” is evident in the sustaining of all systems, living or inanimate. His hand guides the planets and stars.

By the way, what's the word for "hand" in Spanish? It's *mano*, isn't it. Our word "manual," as in "manual labor" comes from that root. Some look down on that term as belittling, but the truth is that "manual labor," the work of the hand, was invented by God!

Just how God created is something not revealed. Science can't explain it. The wisest person on earth can't comprehend matter coming from nothing. It really doesn't come from "nothing;" it comes from God's energy. Man is left to ponder, admire and worship the Creator in the works of His hand. That's why this day, the Sabbath, is set apart as a reminder of His creative work. In today's world, with its emphasis on atheistic evolution, we need to be reminded that "all this" came from the hand of a loving, designing Engineer. It didn't just happen! The hand of the Lord made everything! Satan is most desirous that the personal God of creation be forgotten, so that mankind will pursue a selfish and materialistic lifestyle and reap destruction.

Actually, God's creative energy did not cease when He had made the world and its contents. God's energy of creation did not come to an end after the first Sabbath. Still today everything in nature is upheld and sustained by the power of His hand. Speaking of living things great and small David wrote, "These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good." Psalm 104:28. "The eyes of all look expectantly to You and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." Psalm 145:16.

Writing Hands

Next we will consider the operation of God's hand as it relates to His just and holy requirements, the Ten Commandments. These are of such importance that they were not entrusted to the writing of the prophet Moses, as faithful as he was. God personally spoke and wrote His law from Mt. Sinai. "So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to

perform, that is the Ten Commandments: and He wrote them on two tablets of stone." Deuteronomy 4:13. "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 9:10.

Notice that the Ten Commandments are called specifically the "covenant." That is because the Decalogue comprises the terms of the covenant, or agreement between the Creator and His subjects. His law is the basis of the relationship that exists between God and His creatures. Often you will find the word "covenant" used in the Bible referring directly to the Ten Commandment law. Because His law was housed in the ark, it was called the "ark of the covenant."

In any relationship, business or personal, there must be a basis of understanding. There must be terms that are agreed upon. The Ten Commandments are the "terms," the "contract," or the "covenant" between God and the beings He has created. To enforce the concept of their perpetuity, He Himself inscribed them in stone. The terms of His relationship with people have not changed; His righteous law is still the basis of His agreement. In the New Covenant, He proposes to write His law not on stone, but on the tablets of our hearts, renewed by His Spirit. "'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days,' says the LORD, 'I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'" Hebrews 8:10.

God's handwriting is still at work! He is writing His message of love in the hearts and lives of those who will yield to His influence, and sending that message around the world. It's a message that says that He can take any life and make it new and fulfilling. He can change our characters from being self-centered to demonstrating God-like selflessness. Though the heart may be as hard as rock, He can change our hearts and make them new and pliant, receptive to the working of His hand.

We have a choice in life, and it is this. We may submit to the mighty hand of God and allow Him to change us into His likeness, to write His law, His character, in our hearts; or we can resist and persist in our proud, selfish ways and be like Belshazzar, the ancient king of Babylon, who was given sufficient information to know of God and His ways, but consistently said "no" to the hand of mercy, until he finally witnessed the hand of judgment write a testimony of doom that fateful night on the palace wall. The handwriting of God will take place in our lives one way or the other; either in the function of restoration or the inscription of indictment. The choice is ours.

Touching Hands

While on earth, Jesus often used His hands in healing and blessing. After giving the Sermon on the Mount a leper approached Him and asked for healing. As the crowds watched in wonderment, "Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Matthew 8:3.

You would have had to live back then I suppose to gain the full appreciation of Christ's act of touching him with His hand. At that time the one afflicted with leprosy was considered under a divine curse. He was rejected by God. His ailment was incurable and was such that he was forced to separate from society and family. He was obliged to cry out, "unclean, unclean" if he approached an area where people might be. Think about the emotional burden of this disease!

Something drew this leper to Jesus and prompted him to ask for healing. Jesus could have healed him by merely speaking the word, but in this case He didn't. He touched him with His healing hand. This might be just speculation, but I believe the fact that Jesus touched him in itself would have been a life-changing event. The healing of his disease was bonus. That touch from the hand of the Savior spoke acceptance, forgiveness and love. That

same hand, the hand of Christ is here to touch us today and heal us of our spiritual leprosy.

Just a few verses later we read about the mother-in-law of Peter who was sick with a fever. "He touched her hand, and the fever left her." Matthew 8:15.

In the next chapter we are told again of Jesus' touch. "While He spoke these things, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.'" Matthew 9:18. With His hand He lifted her to life.

Later Peter aspired to follow his Lord in walking on the surface of Lake Galilee. He was doing fine, until he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to sink, and cried out "Lord, save me." "And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'" Matthew 14:31. Is that where you are? Do you find yourself sinking, slipping beneath the waves? The hand of Jesus is still stretched out to rescue!

In all of these stories and many others there are valuable lessons of Jesus' healing, lifting, saving and life-giving hands.

With His hands He broke bread to feed them.

With His hands He blessed the little children whose mothers placed them on His lap.

With His hands He washed the feet of His disciples.

With His hands He restored sight to the blind and a severed ear chopped off by a zealous disciple.

With His hands He pronounced a parting blessing as He was lifted from them to glory.

There's something deeply meaningful in the touch of a person's hand. You know this to be true. Just the slightest touch can be uplifting and encouraging. Psychologists today affirm that we

need “touching” for emotional health and well-being. How much more do we need the touch of His hand!

Wounded Hands

The wonderful Gospel story tells us that our God foresaw man’s desperate condition, and even before sin was chosen, He was prepared with a plan to rescue fallen mankind. The price tag would be very high; it would require the sacrifice of God Himself, Jesus Christ.

By a most “cruel and unusual punishment” God would pay the penalty for transgression. He would allow Himself to be subjected to what is arguably the most inhuman form of execution ever devised, that of crucifixion. The genius of the torture was in its length, its pain inducing technique and its humiliation. It was invented to maximize suffering. Our word “*excruciating*” comes directly from that experience. The sword of beheading was an act of mercy in contrast to being hung on a cross.

And yet our Savior, the Son of God accepted “even the death of the cross” in order to satisfy the requirements of salvation. In this process large spikes were used to pin the victim to wooden beams, which would then be hoisted and dropped with a jarring thud into a socket prepared for it in the ground, and the crucified would languish in pain and suffering until physically unable to perform the act of breathing. Usually death came after a few days of unspeakable agony. That’s what happened to the hands of Jesus. Those creative, sustaining, healing and loving hands were wounded for our transgressions. “For dogs have surrounded Me; the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet.” Psalm 22:16.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, some of whom struggled in believing that it was actually Him. He invited them to touch His hands and the scar where the spear

entered. Some day you and I will reverently touch those nail-scarred hands.

Long ago a young boy furiously pedaled his bicycle up the street, when a mechanical malfunction occurred. The "pedal" of his bicycle somehow came off its axle, and in the next stroke his foot slipped off the smooth axle and passed violent against it, resulting in a gash several inches in length. Fortunately, a few stitches and a week or two later and healing came. But the scar of that day has remained on my left leg for some fifty years now, and I expect that it will accompany me on the rest of my journey. But, it won't be there when I'm taken to heaven. In the "twinkling of an eye" that scar and every other will be gone. It might look for it, but it won't be there. In the immortal body I will be given on that day there will be neither blemish nor scar. In glory the only scars will be those in Jesus body, the scars of the cross. They will be the only reminder of our sin. We will not be able to restrain ourselves in gratitude as we learn more of what our salvation cost.

There will be people in heaven who never had the benefit of hearing the story of the Gospel. They've lived in places and at times where the Church was unable to reach them with the news of Jesus, and so they never had the advantage of reading His Word or hearing the message of grace. But they responded to His Spirit's call and walked in the light that was given them, even though they were never able to hear about His creating, sustaining and redeeming hands. These will wake up in the resurrection with many questions! Can you imagine it! As they rise in immortality their minds will flood with curiosity. At some point the dear Lord will take these aside and explain the story of creation, the fall and redemption. It was to these that the prophet was pointed when he wrote, "And someone will say to Him, 'What are these wounds in your hands?' Then He will answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.'" Zechariah 13:6.

There is a story, repeated often, of a woman whose hands were ugly and disfigured. Her child, upon reaching a certain age of awareness, became embarrassed by the spectacle of her mother's hands, and was very reluctant to have the subject come up among her friends. Then one day the mother disclosed to her daughter the cause of her condition. When her daughter had been an infant, a fire raged through their house. The mother had saved her baby, protecting her with her hands so that the flame would not endanger her loved one. In the course of this rescue, her hands became burnt and unsightly. When learning the truth of her mother's scarred hands, they no longer appeared ugly to the girl. They took on a whole different meaning. She was now proud of those saving hands that had once caused her to be embarrassed.

When we get to heaven, our eyes will delight in many beautiful sights: sights that exceed the capacity of human words to describe. We'll behold the city of gold; majestic galaxies; wondrous creatures unseen on earth. But there will be one sight that forever will be the most glorious of all, which will be the eternal object of admiration and gratitude, and that will be the scars in His hands.

Many other aspects of His hands we could discuss, but we'll close with this one. We've looked His creating, writing, touching and wounded hands. Today He holds out those beautiful hands in invitation. The nail-pierced hands are extended to us today, asking for our hearts and lives. He says today, "Come to me and I will give you rest." Today the hand with a scar taps at the door of your heart and says, "May I come in?" What will your answer be?