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In the Festival, Daniel 5:1-9, 17-24

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Introduction

- On the Gulf Coast we have a phenomenon called “Hurricane Parties.”
 - A successor of Neb, Belshazzar, held a festival while the Medes and Persians were outside the city walls.
 - During their party, Belshazzar sees a hand writing on the wall. It’s a classic story. What’s the meaning of it?

The Festival

- They are under siege from the Medes and Persians. Death was on their doorstep, and in the midst of this siege they throw a wild party.
 - He calls for the plunder that Neb brought from Jerusalem.
 - If you’re going to understand this story, then you must understand that this party was *religious* in nature. He was declaring that God had no power in Babylon.
 - His demeaning of Yahweh’s stuff was demeaning Yahweh.
- Isn’t this still how it goes today? The closer that death gets the more frantic the sensual pleasure, reveling in silver and gold, and religious frenzy.
 - If death means extinction then no one can live with that fact. In the end, nothing has meaning and nothing matters.
 - The journalist Ernest Becker wrote a book called *The Denial of Death*, where he claimed that civilization was a great project to stave off the sense that we are insignificant, forgettable, and insubstantial.
 - He said people follow the romantic solution, creative solution, or the religious solution.

- People are either drinking and sleeping their way out of awareness or spending time shopping.

The Writing on the Wall

- Viktor Frankl wrote *Man's Search for Meaning*, he said the book's success was indicative of our problem.
 - Belshazzar sees a hand writing on the wall and no one can interpret it's meaning.
 - Daniel tells him that his days are numbered because *he exalted himself (23)*.
 - The primary theme beneath all the elements of this story is the problem of human arrogance. What happens when people exalt themselves against God?
 - Loss of meaning, truth, and knowledge.
- The role of Christians today is to declare the writing on the wall to our world that doesn't see it. Satan's dominion has been defeated and the kingdom of God is advancing.
 - By the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus a new kingdom is advancing.
 - We reveal the writing on the wall through preaching the gospel, serving, and loving one another.
 - In the kingdom of God, the writing on the wall is the church. Jesus created a community of people where lives are being changed. They are loving one another.

The Message to Us

- Daniel comes in and reminds Belshazzar of the lessons from Neb. He gives him three lessons for how you find significance:
 - First, you trust God's Word. Daniel didn't want the rewards because he was delivering the words of God.
 - The word of God gives us objective truth and morality. It tells us that we were created therefore we have meaning.

- What if someone says you can't trust the Bible because it's full of errors... then someone digs up an inscription that shows the writer of Daniel knew a lot more about Babylonian history than modern historians. What now?
 - You need to listen to the Bible, including the parts you don't like. Otherwise, how will you know if you know God or you're just following an idol?
- Second, you have to come to grips with pride.
- Third, you need to know the difference between religion and faith.
 - You can truly submit to God or you can use religion to fill your need for significance.