**WHEN GOD CRASHES THE PARTY**

**(Daniel 5:1-31)**

On Christmas Day, 2002, the movie *Catch Me If You Can,* starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks, was released. The film is based on a true story about a teenager named Frank Abagnale who successfully conned banks and the government out of more than $5 million.

At the age 16, after his parents divorced, Frank ran away and for two years led a life of amazing deception. He created false documents and forged checks, as he passed himself off as an airline pilot, a medical doctor, and a practicing attorney.

While posing as a doctor, Frank met a young nurse named Brenda. The two fell in love. When he met her father, a successful lawyer, and her mother, Frank scored points by claiming to be a graduate of the same law school the father had attended. Knowing they were Lutherans, Frank also claimed to be Lutheran. Because Frank looked ten years older than he really was, Brenda’s father hired him as an associate in his law firm.

The FBI, who had been searching high and low for Frank, learned of his whereabouts and crashed Frank and Brenda’s elaborate engagement party at her parents’ mansion. Frank, however, sees them coming, and he races upstairs to pack his bags. Before the agents enter the home, Brenda follows him into the bedroom. He opens his suitcases to pack for a quick getaway, and Brenda sees thousands of dollars in cash stuffed in each one. Frank decides to tell her the truth.

He confesses, “Brenda, I don’t want to lie to you anymore. I’m not a doctor. I’ve never been to medical school. I’m not a lawyer or a Harvard graduate. I’m not even a Lutheran. I ran away from home a year and a half ago when I was 16!”

With confusion written upon her face, Brenda says, “Frank? Frank? You’re not a Lutheran?”

Frank escaped the party and eluded the FBI, but they caught up to him, apprehended him, and eventually, because of his skills, he was hired by the FBI to help them solve forgery cases.

Tonight, I want to impress upon you the fact that God is well-able to crash the party of the wicked. And when God crashes the party, no one is going to escape or elude Him.

Last week we saw that God crashed the party of King Nebuchadnezzar. It was a roof-top party, and the King may have been the only once in attendance, but when the King began to congratulate himself for all that he had accomplished and all that he had done for his own glory, God crashed that party. For seven years, the King lived out in the field eating grass like a cow until God restored his sanity, and the King realized God is the only true sovereign in the universe to whom all glory is due. When God crashed that party, the end result was beneficial.

In the next chapter, Daniel 5, God crashes another party, an actual party, and this time, the end result was tragic. Let’s begin by reading the first 12 verses.

Let me point out a few things. When the Bible refers to someone as the father of someone else, it doesn’t always mean the direct biological father of that someone. Often, it simply means the ancestor of the person. History tells us that King Nebuchadnezzar was not the actual father of Belshazzar. There were several kings in between. Also, Belshazzar was not the sole King of the entire Babylonian Empire. His father, Nabonidus, was the last Emperor of Babylon. Nabonidus, however, had moved his royal residence to the southeast of Edom, and he left his eldest son, Belshazzar to rule the city of Babylon. In a sense, Belshazzar was a co-regent. Since Daniel was living in Babylon, as far as he was concerned, Belshazzar was the King.

It was interesting that the King chose to have a party at this particular time, because at that time, the City of Babylon was under siege by the army of the Medes and Persians. The people of Babylon believed that their city was impenetrable, that they could survive a siege indefinitely. At various points, the wall around the city was hundreds of feet high. There was plenty of farmland inside the walls for them to grow crops to feed the city. Also, the Euphrates River ran north to south under the wall through the city giving them both fresh water and fish.

The King seemed to be saying to the attacking army, you are of no concern to us. We are going to have a blowout party while you remain camped on the outside of our walls.

1. **WHEN GOD CRASHES THE PARTY, HE HAS A GOOD REASON.**

The text shows us that Belshazzar was guilty of the worst sort of blasphemy. While the liquor is flowing freely at his party, the King orders that the gold and silver cups that King Nebuchadnezzar has taken from the temple in Jerusalem be brought to the party. These vessels that had been consecrated to the worship of God are now being used by the King and his guests to hold their wine as they worshipped their false gods made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

In his commentary on Daniel, Sinclair Ferguson wrote of King Belshazzar:

As he drank, the alcohol began to depress the restraining element in his mental powers. The caged monster of his heart was released. We can almost hear his boastful spirit calling out to some of the servants, doubtless to the horror of some present at the table, “Get those Jewish holy cups here, and we’ll drink a toast to those parasites, too.”

. . . Belshazzar’s heart was a factory of rebellion against God. Now he cast off restraint and showed it . . . He knew exactly what those vessels were and from where they had come. He did not sin in ignorance but with knowledge.

The NT tells us, “God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his one flesh will from the flesh reap corruption” (Galatians 6:7-8). The NLT renders that last verse this way, “Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death.”

Belshazzar was about to reap the harvest of the seeds he had sown.

1. **WHEN GOD CRASHES THE PARTY, HE GETS THE ATTENTION.**

When Belshazzar orders the holy items that had once been in the temple at Jerusalem to be brought to the party, all eyes were on him. When God orders a dismembered hand to appear in the banquet hall, and when that hand begins to write on the wall of that room, the eyes of everyone shift from the earth king to the activity of the Heavenly King.

I think God crashes parties to reorient us, to get our attention off of whatever it is on and back to where it should be. Look with me at Romans 8:5-8. Look at the king’s reaction which is recorded in Daniel 5:6.

The Darby translation of v. 6 reads: “Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.”

What do you suppose the text means when it says “the joints of his loins were loosed?” Someone suggested that it means he soiled himself. This sight scared the [expletive deleted] out of the king, and his knees knocked together.

A huge part of our problem is that we have our eyes set on the wrong thing. We are looking in the wrong direction. We need to get our eyes off of ourselves. We need to get our eyes off of other people. We even need to get our eyes off the circumstances, and we need to look at Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 says that we need to look “to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.”

1. **WHEN GOD CRASHES THE PARTY, HE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.**

None of the wise men could tell the King what the writing meant. It was to them an unsolvable riddle. The only one to give the King good counsel is the one mentioned in v. 10. Some say that the queen in this verse is not the wife of Belshazzar but rather the Queen Mother. She has been around. She knows the history of the court better than the King. She tells him about Daniel.

The King sends for Daniel. Let’s pick up in v. 13 and read through v. 28. Let’s look at why the wise men had such difficulty. The message was likely written in either Hebrew or Aramaic. In both of those languages, writing was read from right to left. Also, because the material on which you wrote was so valuable, you wanted to conserve. As a result, there were no spaces between the words, and there weren’t even any vowels. The reader supplied the vowels as he read.

Let’s do this using English letters. Can you read this common phrase: DLRWHTDVLSDGRF? Reading from right to left and supplying the appropriate vowels gives us: “For God So Loved the World.”

Again, using English letters, the message Daniel saw may have been: NSRPLKTNMNM, which Daniel read as, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin.”

Mene means “numbered.” Tekel means “weighed.” And Parsin means “divided.”

Daniel knew the message meant, “The days of your Kingship have been numbered, and your number is up. You have been weighed in the scales of God’s justice, and you didn’t make weight. You are a lightweight as far as God is concerned. Your Kingdom is going to be conquered and divided up between the Medes and Persians.”

When God speaks, He often chooses to use human instruments to make clear what His message means. Look at what Paul wrote in Romans 10:14-17.

1. **WHEN GOD CRASHES THE PARTY, THE PARTY IS OVER.**

Look at vv. 29-31. God’s man was rewarded, but the King was killed that very night. What happened? Do you remember how I said the Euphrates River ran under the wall of Babylon? The army of the Medes and Persians diverted the flow of the river, and their army marched down the riverbed, underneath the wall. The King was found and killed.

It says that Darius the Mede received the Kingdom. The first King of the Persian Empire was Cyrus. Who was Darius the Mede? Some say he was the general who led the assault against Babylon. The history is a bit unclear. The text doesn’t say he became the King. It says that he received the Kingdom.

One day God is going to crash the party, and the party will be over. We must be ready for His coming. Look at what Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:1-4, 8-13.

This party will come to an end, but God is going to throw a new party. In the Book of Revelation, the party is called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Only those belong to Him will be able to attend. It is time to RSVP by placing your faith in Jesus both as your Savior and your Lord.