

The story of Daniel in the Old Testament is particularly relevant and instructive for us as modern-day Christians. The reason why? Because Daniel's story is much like that of all Christians—in reality and in potential. And that's surely no accident. In this series, we are looking at the highly instructive commonalities of Daniel's life in God to our lives in Christ. This is the seventh in that series—so let's recap the first six.

The first Daniel relevancy was “time and place.” Daniel lived during a very interesting time and place in history. Likewise, every serious Christian is, by God's providence, constantly in a time and place where God can and will very effectively use them for the purposes of His Kingdom.

The second Daniel relevancy was “competence.” Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar was interested in those who had the top competence in helping to manage his kingdom. Likewise, Christians are best positioned to advance the Gospel and touch others for Christ in their work lives when they are highly competent.

The third Daniel relevancy focused on the “lifetime ambassador.” Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar and successor pagan-kingdoms competently in very unique ways. But Daniel never stopped being a part of God's core economy: he was a lifetime ambassador for God in a foreign kingdom, no matter his life season.

The fourth Daniel relevancy was “relentlessly faithful dailiness,” which applies to every role we hold as believers. Specifically, that applies to management of a team at work—year-in and year-out.

The fifth Daniel relevancy was “building bankable trust.” Our personal character and our consistent performance over a long period of time in a variety of key roles works to make our complete package “bankable”—and therefore transferable—to upcoming opportunities.

The sixth relevancy of Daniel was his “response to calamities.” We live in a time with a newly fresh acquaintance with calamities. And every one of Daniel's responses to several calamities—whether personal or relating to his high-end vocational service or both—were amazingly perceptive and effective!

Now, to the seventh relevancy of Daniel: his “unavoidable enemies and conflicts.”

Well, now, the reality of unavoidable enemies and conflicts is happening a lot today, too. The world is full of strife and conflict—not just nation against nation, but group against group, and person against person. And, contrary to what we may like to believe, some of that strife is getting to be very unavoidable.

Let's be real—it's very rare that governance and politics is about competence, wonderful results, and universal applause! No, in nations and in organizations, governance and politics is often about covetousness and power and gain and self-righteousness—and all of that nastiness at the expense of truth, civility, and—of course—opponents. And that's why stories in the book of Daniel are so instructive.

You see, Daniel and some of his Hebrew friends served leaders very successfully. Daniel performed with very high levels of competence day-in and day-out, year-in and year-out, decade-in and decade-out. For Daniel's competitors aspiring to come alongside or even replace Daniel in high office, it must have been infuriating to see Daniel thriving with no end in sight. And that type of success naturally stimulates envy and covetousness and rivalry. Yes, it's just human nature to be envious and to covet and to be competitive—then and now! Those all-too-human responses were inflicted on Daniel and the Hebrew boys. And we can take some serious, current-era lessons away from those experiences.

So, here are three such events that are worthy of a look. In fact, these events epitomize broad, *current* sources of enemies and conflict!

- *First, being falsely associated with the incompetence of a group.* King Neb had a dream—and none of the king’s normal cadre of wise men could interpret the dream. The king became so angry that he commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be condemned to death—including Daniel! When Daniel heard this, he not only defused the situation...he accurately interpreted the dream! But the king’s death edict had covered Daniel just for his membership in the king’s group of wise men.
- *Second, being part of a persecuted group of God’s people.* When King Neb created a golden image for all to worship, the Jews’ enemies maliciously accused the Jews of not following the king. You know the story: consistently taking a stand for God, three Hebrew boys were thrown into the fiery furnace. But God protected them completely. Even today, we can have enemies and experience persecution for simply following strong after God...as Jesus Himself promised!
- *Third, being competent and holding high position.* You know this story, too. A successor king, Darius, planned to put Daniel in power over his kingdom. So, ambitious high officials conspired against Daniel—with their chosen path to condemn Daniel being his devout, highly predictable following after God. Those high officials deceived Darius into condemning Daniel to death in the lion’s den. But, of course, Daniel was protected, and the tables were completely turned on Daniel’s enemies!

You see, in these three stories found in the book of Daniel, strife and enemies of God’s blameless people originated from three different impetuses. First, a death sentence was levied simply due to Daniel’s vocational membership in an elite vocational cluster of wise men. Second, the fiery furnace was orchestrated simply for the singled-out persecution of God’s faithful followers, the Jews. And third, the lion’s den was germinated due to the jealousy of his rivals and their coveting of Daniel’s high office.

Now, Christians know that we must avoid unwisely creating enemies and conflict—Romans 12:18 says, “...so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” But Christians can acquire enemies for doing the right thing: for simply speaking Godly wisdom, for simply being a Jesus-follower, or for simply being competent and awarded high office. In other words, Christians can be treated just like Daniel was treated! In fact, count on that! Here’s what Jesus specifically said about all this: “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.” Wow, did you get that? The more Christians work on Jesus’ account, the more blameless and accomplished a believer is, then our expectation from Jesus Himself is our reviling and persecution by enemies! How about the apostles, like Peter and Paul, for example? They too experienced unavoidable enemies and conflicts!

In the life of Daniel, some stories ended in the revilers not only giving glory to God but also in Daniel’s promotion! Daniel 2:48 tells us that very quickly, Daniel went from being under King Neb’s death sentence to receiving gifts and high honors and being ruler of the whole province of Babylon! Such an amazing migration *can* happen to you and me, too. But, even if it doesn’t, Jesus assures us of our reward in heaven! You see, God *is* working all this reviling and persecution together for good—remember, He says that our reward is in heaven! But the short-term pain can still be very real. But, again, what was Jesus’ command to us? Rejoice *now* when reviling and persecution falsely happen. So, are you living out a Daniel-type of circumstance with unavoidable enemies and conflicts? *Then rejoice now in your personal injustice!*

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. Think about the enemies that Christians tend to have in the current era, specific to the context you live in (e.g., a specific nation or workplace). Are these enemies largely unwisely brought on by unloving Christians picking ill-chosen fights or are these enemies largely due to loving Christians truly doing work on Jesus' account? How might your answer be different for a Christian in a different context (e.g., a Christian in another nation or workplace)? Be discerningly specific.
  
2. Have you been falsely condemned simply by your willing or unsought membership in a group that acted badly or unwisely or incompetently? Be specific about the circumstances, your response then, and your response now.
  
3. Have you learned to rejoice in your personal injustice (Matthew 5:11-12a)? If not, why do we have so much trouble following this command by Jesus?