

Rather wistfully, this is the last installment in this series about Daniel. 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 have been looking at the highly instructive commonalities of Daniel's life in God to our lives in Christ, Who is the cornerstone of the household of God, as Paul told the Ephesians! Our choice of our cornerstone reality, for better or worse, is what this last episode about Daniel is about.

But let's start with a brief recap of each of the first eleven episodes about Daniel. Here they are...go listen!

1. Daniel was relevant to his time and place.
2. Daniel was competent.
3. Daniel was a lifetime ambassador for God.
4. Daniel revealed his relentlessly faithful dailiness.
5. Daniel was great at building bankable trust.
6. Daniel's responses to calamities were fantastic.
7. Daniel expertly handled unavoidable enemies and conflicts.
8. Daniel steadfastly just trusted God, only God—fearlessly!
9. Daniel applied the practice of seek, reveal, speak.
10. Daniel superbly surfed the biggest societal and political waves.
11. Daniel was an extraordinary link to the future in amazing ways.

Now, to the twelfth relevancy of Daniel, and that's the practice of *astutely avoiding flawed cornerstones*. That's right, *astutely avoiding flawed cornerstones*. And, if there ever was a person who was in a powerful position multiple times to easily choose a false cornerstone, it would have been Daniel. But Daniel kept turning to the only cornerstone worthy and unshakeable—God! And Daniel did that under some of the most difficult life circumstances imaginable. With this focus, let's recall some of Daniel's amazing choices! We'll go through eight events in Daniel's life that show how consistently he avoided flawed cornerstones.

First, even though King Nebuchadnezzar was an enemy of Daniel's people and improperly brought vessels from the house of God to his personal treasury, Daniel agreed to serve the king as one of the competent youths selected from the people of Israel. Surely, here, the prophet Jeremiah's long-time warnings to God's people gave Daniel perspective that God's will was actually being done through their enemies! The fall of the Northern Kingdom about 125 years earlier—coupled with the powerful words delivered by the prophets and the fall of the Southern Kingdom—helped Daniel navigate a rude reality: God's people were the source of this problem and Daniel was participating in God's will, however unpleasant that might be.

Second, that didn't mean that Daniel should defile himself with improper actions expected by the king. With God giving Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the king's chief of the eunuchs, Daniel negotiated a test of a different food menu, and the results were in Daniel's favor! Defiling was avoided!

Third, God gave Daniel and the Hebrew youths learning and wisdom, and Daniel "had understanding in all visions and dreams." This is shocking! Daniel had been stripped of his nation, his homeland, his temple, his plans, his freedom, apparently even normal family involvement—but God was still his cornerstone! And Daniel received three key necessities from God: learning...wisdom...prophetic understanding. This parallels the Holy Spirit in John 14, Who, as promised, teaches us all things, regardless of circumstances!

Fourth, in the matter of the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, the king decreed his dream must be interpreted or all the wise men would be destroyed! Daniel joined with his companions seeking the mercy

of God, and God gave Daniel a specific revelation. Daniel did not attempt to manipulate the king or the politics of the moment—instead, he sought his cornerstone: God. You see, King Neb had the power but not the spiritual knowledge. Daniel did not seek the king’s approval...instead, Daniel gave God’s revelation to the king! And so, King Neb, the pagan king, then rightly fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel!

Fifth, Daniel was called upon by King Neb to interpret another dream—with the king actually appealing to Daniel on the basis that “the spirit of the holy gods is in you.” (Daniel 4:18) Once again, Daniel gave the interpretation faithfully, even though it was ugly and ominous for the king. You see, the king’s ego was out of control and God dealt with it, and God did so in direct context of His fresh revelation to Daniel. Get the pattern here? Daniel turns to God as his cornerstone every time—for deliverance, help, revelation, and favor. Then God honors His revelations to Daniel with actual events of complete confirmation!

Sixth, a different king, Belshazzar, sees a hand literally writing on the wall. Once again, Daniel is called. Think of it: pagan kings are happily dependent upon Daniel and his cornerstone, God, for illumination. But here’s the amazing thing: for yet another time, Daniel’s actions are not about toadying to the most powerful person in a nation—Daniel does not ever seek after a flawed cornerstone. Instead, Daniel returns to his cornerstone—God—for understanding, power, and, ultimately, unsought personal promotion!

Seventh, yet another king, Darius, made plans to set Daniel over his entire kingdom. So Daniel’s enemies duped King Darius into creating a new law created solely to trap Daniel for his prayers to His God instead of Darius. What did Daniel do? Go appeal personally to King Darius as Daniel’s cornerstone, his deliverance? No. Try to get this new law repealed through political means? No. Stop praying to God as a sign Daniel would compromise his connection to his cornerstone, God? No. Did Daniel appeal to a lighter punishment than the lion’s den, once he was found guilty of praying to God? No. Daniel simply relied on his cornerstone, God. Come now, this is crazy good! Daniel, the most powerful man under the king, did not appeal to any flawed cornerstones...he didn’t revert to the mercy of the king, or manipulative politics, or the rigid law of the land, or self-righteousness, or even rightful condemnation of his political enemies.

In fact, when King Darius fully understood all that had happened, he said, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” (Daniel 6:16) Wow, that was the pagan king exhorting Daniel to appeal to God, the true cornerstone! And of course, Daniel was spared by the hand of God! And justice was then indeed done with regard to Daniel’s enemies. Then, in a public decree, Darius exalted Daniel’s cornerstone—God!

Eighth, the remainder of stories in Daniel recount Daniel’s key visions and revelations from God, narratives of great relevance to both world history and the doings of the Kingdom of God—relevant to the past, present, and future of every person and era. These are astounding core revelations of dramatic import for all eternity—received from the Cornerstone, God. Although, we might add, those did not presumptively come easy: the “prince of the kingdom of Persia” fought the revelation to Daniel in Chapter 10, but, as Daniel was told, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.”

This is it! One of the most powerful men in the entire history of the Middle East, Daniel, served extremely well while astutely avoiding flawed cornerstones like kings or nations or politics or laws or his people or his family or pining after a bygone era of temple sacrifice. *That* is a badly-needed lesson for Christians—not only avoiding such flawed cornerstones but also avoiding a mixing of man’s pretensions with God. Every institution, every pretender short of Jesus Himself is shakeable as a cornerstone. “Put not your trust in princes.” (Psalm 146:3) Like Daniel, we must not make idols of seemingly good but essentially flawed institutions. We simply must seek Jesus alone, the cornerstone of the household of God! *Unfailing!*

A&A: Application & Action

1. Do you freely mix cornerstones and limit the power of God with all those approaches? Hmmmmm. Is your cornerstone really just Jesus? If so, give evidence of that which a jury of your peers could convict you on. If not, why not?
2. For a long time, the song, “Dare to be a Daniel,” was a staple in teaching children in church. But “daring well” essentially assumes taking risks worthy of the taking. Just what does that mean for Christian children in the current context...including your children or prospective children? Elaborate.
3. For a very long time, many American Christians have formally and informally extolled the nation, family, and even church denominations as bedrocks of the lives of Christians in America. But, in the last few decades, these institutions are seemingly quite weakened—if not failing outright. Is this an unwise mixing of flawed institutions with Jesus, the one true cornerstone of the household of God? (Ephesians 2) What is the fallout and disillusionment that can follow with this mixing...and are we seeing some of that in the current era? Discuss.