

Journal week 1

1. What surprised or delighted you most about these little stories? Did you have any concerns about what you read or how the author expressed himself?
These stories were delightful and seemed to be a retelling of stories that are in the book of Daniel but written in a story telling way that you might tell to children- very clear, catching you attention and simple. I liked how God gave Daniel wisdom to convince King Cyrus that was very straight forward, simple, yet very clear in demonstrating that Bel and the Dragon were not gods. There was no trickery.
2. What beliefs about God and the nations' gods do you think would have been encouraging to Jews living under the rule of the Gentiles? Why?
Of course the beliefs of the Hebrews willing to obey God with the Passover and then through the plagues in Egypt with the dramatic rescue of the Hebrew people through the Red Sea. Pharoah and his gods were useless in power against the True God of Israel. This showing that following what God has spoken brings about the dynamic interventions of God. It would be encouraging to have as your God the God that controls all and is able to bring deliverance.
3. What can we learn about this time from the themes or ideas presented in these little stories?
The pitting of the world's so called gods against our God is ultimately no match. The Scriptures reveal instances of revealed wisdom given from God to His believers that can FIGHT the Battle for you.
4. Do you think any of these sentiments would be encouraging to people today as they struggle with the uncertainties of our day?
Looking to God during stressful and unpredictable times and relying on His guiding wisdom is what we need. We do not need to struggle to figure it all out. God responds to our dependent Trust in Him and His faithful goodness.

Journal Week 2

1. What did you learn about this challenging period of history that you did not know before?
How the Greeks and culture that came by way of Kings and military leaders that wanted to increase their empires by consuming Israel and especially Jerusalem might have come slowly – but ultimately led to the horrible absolute DEMANDS to reject your faith or be tortured and DIE. The goal of these big military leaders was NOT – NOT good in history – the destruction that comes to mankind is truly horrific!!!– and here we are as well- having faced WW1 and WW11 and now Putin- Yikes. I'm surprised at the long suffering of God and I understand this kind of people going into the Lake of Fire.
2. What did you learn about martyrdom? About God? About sin?
*Their confidence in surrendering their lives totally into the hands of God – who would NOT fail them- that their suffering was only temporary and they were secure in their reliance on the ultimate promise of eternal life. They were very strong in their belief toward our God of mercy, faithfulness and Vengeance. Some considered turning from their faith an unacceptable sin. These Scriptures came to me:
*But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that tests the mind and the heart, let me see Thy vengeance on them: for unto Thee have I committed my cause- rolling it on You.
Lam 5.16 The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned! Jer11.20
I think Hannah and her 7 sons may have well known these.**
3. What was the attitude of this writer toward the Greek?

He considered their actions against them as evil and are laid out before God who has the ultimate authority to require accountability of their actions against the Jews. I think he directed this accounting – not to them personally but to their actions against them.

4. How has your understanding of the Jews living before the time of Jesus changed?

So much more understanding of their long terms of terrible suffering (some similar to the Holocaust)- it also shows better why they hated the gentiles- they did not easily accept the gentiles into an opportunity for forgiveness in Christ.

5. What does this background add to your understanding of the teaching given by the author of Hebrews? Why do you think he included these well-known stories about the Jewish martyrs from this time?

This makes it so much clearer the tough requirements that faith demands in response to the world's rejection and hatred of Jesus that comes against believers. I have under appreciated this Scripture Heb 11.38 – and the multitudes of the Jewish peoples who have suffered so severely. This the great Faith chapter shows the people of BIG Faith toward God – as our Examples on how to live and stand in faith or die for God.

Journal Week 3

1. Explain what seems to be Matthew's play on the title "king of the Jews" found in chapter 2 from what you learned from this week's lesson.

The Magi by faith believed the baby born as prophesied was indeed the Messiah- the true King of the Jews who was King AT His birth and very King before His birth. Though Rome titled Herod as King of Jews, a temporary title, in their midst was the True King Jesus of eternity. Matthew was sure to highlight and document this for all- was this a "pinch" in their mind? But how striking that so many people in this time failed to believe Him.

2. Choose two other background issues that help clarify Matthew's message. What did you learn that you had never seen before? In what way has your understanding of this chapter been stretched or deepened by knowing more about these two issues?

With all the ongoing messes of political and military empires, cities, or peoples- kings of the earth are temporary but the true King is eternal, and prophecy is sure – both rising above all of mankind's belief's or disbeliefs. That despite what man sees in his life of what surrounds him- his living civilization – God's plans and purposes exist and come forward and His servants have opportunity to see the plans in action and be part of them. I feel strengthened in my awareness of all the ongoing nonbelief and hatred that has prevailed in (historical as well) society among us – but also strengthened in the awareness of God's working in the midst of it all. God is not subject to man but above all things.