

The Book of Daniel

Nebchadnezzar and Daniel's Friends

Interpreting the Text:

1. Looking at Daniel 3, the story of the fiery furnace, and Daniel 6, the story of the lion's den, compare these two miracles. How are they similar? How are they different?
2. What was at issue in the refusal of Jews to participate in the worship of idols? How would this refusal be viewed by Gentiles?
3. What do these stories tell us about Jewish religious law at the time when they were written? How did the Jewish people view the Gentile rule?
4. How is the Babylonian empire portrayed in these chapters? What details from the text suggest a dramatic irony or characterizing?

Applying the Text:

1. These two stories are often taught to younger audiences as models of trust in God and bravery in the face of oppressive authorities. How would you teach these stories to an audience of children? Would you change anything in your approach when teaching adults?
2. The fourth figure in the miracle of the fiery furnace is mysterious and disputed. How does an interpretation of this figure as Jesus impact our reception of the story? How does it change how we understand God and/or Jesus?
3. These stories may have come more from a place of genuine fear rather than historic reality for the Jewish people who told them. In what ways does imagining the worst-case scenario (even when God provides salvation in the end) still function in how we tell our own stories?