**Daniel Additions**

The Book of Daniel in the LXX and Vulgate contains 3 additional writings, not found in the MT or the Protestant Bible. *Daniel* was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, but the *“Additions*” were in Greek. They are:

* The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the 3 Young Men
* Bel and the Dragon and
* Susanna.

*The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the 3 Young Men:*

The *Additions* are thought to have been composed during the Maccabean period (c.165-100 BC) when the Jewish people were suffering under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Early church fathers treated this textas Scripture. It remained part of the Canon until the Reformation; indeed, the 2 lengthy psalms had considerable influence throughout the Christian church. Roman Catholic, Episcopal/Anglican, and Lutheran churches use the *Song of the 3 Young Men* liturgically as a canticle.

The *Prayer* and *Song* follow Dan.3:23, the story about Daniel’s 3 friends being bound and pushed into the fiery furnace. Azariah was the Hebrew name of 1 of the young men (Abednego); the other 2 were Hananiah (Shadrach), and Mishaal (Meshach). The *Prayer* is a praise to God for sending His angel to protect them in the fiery furnace.

The *Prayer* is a great example of Hebrew devotional writing. It opens with the standard Jewish benediction: “Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, and worthy of praise; and thy name is glorified forever. For thou art just in all that thou hast done to us, and all they works are true, and all thy ways right, and all thy judgments are truth.” The *Prayer* proceeds as a standard psalm of lament, and it closes with a call for a theodicy: “Let them know that thou are the Lord, the only God, glorious over the whole world.” The refrain, “Sing praise to Him and highly exalt Him forever,” occurs 32 times in the *Song*.

Following the *Prayer*, the miracle occurred. The Angel of the Lord entered the furnace to be with the young men, and protect them from the fire, which did not touch them at all. Some say the 4th figure was the pre-incarnate Christ. In any event, he was Immanuel, God with us.

Thereafter, the 3 young men sing a psalm known in Anglican and Roman Catholic churches as *Benedictus es Domine*, which is like Ps.147-150. It blesses God and exhorts all creation to do so also.

In the story, the furnace was heated to such an intensity that it burned up the Persian attendants who threw the 3 young men into the fire. Only the *Addition* indicates the fire was a symbol of Hades, but that suggestion has become part of the Jewish and Christian (and artist) interpretations of the tale. Some say the story related to Azarias, a hero of the Maccabean struggle.

*Bel and the Dragon:*

This saga was at the end of the Book of *Daniel* in the LXX. The date and author are unknown, but some believe it was written about 100 BC. The story is a Jewish effort to belittle idolatry and heathen priests. Many Jews were attracted to the religions of the surrounding countries. If a nation defeated Israel in battle, some believed the victor’s gods were more powerful than YHWH.

*Bel and the Dragon* are 2 separate stories. Bel was the Babylonian god worshipped by Persian King Cyrus. Cyrus asked his friend, Daniel, why he did not worship Bel. Daniel responded that Bel was just clay, not a real God. Cyrus offered to put Bel to the test.

He laid a large supply of food in Bel’s temple and sealed the door. If the food was gone the next day, it would prove Bel was a real god and Daniel would be executed for his unbelief. Daniel suspected a trick, so he spread ashes on the Temple floor. If anyone stole the food, his footprints would reveal the truth.

When Cyrus and Daniel returned the next morning, the food was gone. Cyrus declared Bel really was a god. Then, Daniel pointed to footprints on the floor. Temple servants and their families had entered the Temple via a secret door and had taken the food. Daniel was saved; Bel’s priests were executed.

The dragon story is similar. The king worshipped a living serpent. (Greeks worshipped gods, such as Aesculapius whose temple was full of serpents. Worshippers laid on the floor and hoped a snake would slither over them to grant their request.) The king ordered Daniel to worship the serpent. He refused, denying it was a god. To prove his contention, Daniel fed the serpent/dragon cakes of pitch, hair, and fat. When the dragon ate them, he exploded.

The worshippers were angry because Daniel had killed their god. They demanded he must be thrown into a den of starved lions for 7 days. For 6 days, neither Daniel nor the lions ate anything. On the 7th day, the prophet Habakkuk flew to Persia carrying Daniel food. He then disappeared back to Judea. That same day, the king removed Daniel from the den. He was fine; the lions had not eaten him. The king then shut Daniel’s enemies inside the den, and they were eaten immediately.

*Susanna:*

*Susanna* is Dan.13 in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Canons. In the *LXX*, Susanna is a prologue to *Daniel*. Although the author and date are uncertain, many believe it was written in Alexandria about 100 BC. Some say the story was inspired by Jer.29:21-23 where Ahab and Zedekiah were put to death for misconduct with other men’s wives. Others think it was composed in the late years of Alexander Jannaeus (106-79 BC) when conflict was rife between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The story of Susanna has been popular throughout the ages in art and literature. In the *Merchant of Venice,* Shylock said to Portia, “a Daniel come to judgment,” alluding to Daniel’s role in the Susanna legend. Many believe it is one of the best short stories ever written. It focuses on the fate of the oppressed.

The story was set in Babylon during the exile. Joachim’s wife, Susanna, was a devout Jew; he was a rich friend of the Jews. Two Jewish elders/judges lusted after Susanna. Each hid in bushes when she went to her garden with her maids for a bath. After she was in the bath, she sent her maids away. When she was alone, both men jumped out and accosted her, threatening to charge her with adultery if she did not comply with their wishes. She refused, but they had their way with her. As they were attacking her, Susanna cried out. People came running and found her naked in the bath.

The elders/judges claimed they saw Susanna lying with a young man, who ran away. They put her on trial and pressed her for the young man’s name, but of course, she could not answer them. Susanna was condemned to die and cried to the Lord.

As she was being led to her execution, a young man named Daniel asked whether he could question the witnesses. He did so. The testimony of the judges/ elders seriously conflicted with one another. Daniel declared, “I want no part in shedding this woman’s blood.” He prevailed and the judges/elders were convicted and executed in her place.