*CSB – Ignatius Catholic Study Bible - Daniel*

*NJBC – New Jerome Biblical Commentary*

*SN = Special Notes*

*NAB = New American Bible*

*SK = Chinese Bible*

*CCC = Catholic Catechism*

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| **A** | **Overview** * Susanna is the wife of Jo’akim; both of her parents are “righteous” and have “taught their daughter the law of Moses” (Dan 13:2). The two evil Elders lust after her beauty. One afternoon, the two Elders hide in the garden where Susanna is going to take a bath. When the maids are gone, the two elders ask to lie with her. They threaten her that if she refuses, they will testify against her for having an affair with another. Susanna refuses the Elders’ advance and is condemned to death in court based on the Elders’ false testimony. Afterwards, Daniel is sent to question the two Elders separately who give conflicting testimony. This clears up Susanna’s charge and her innocence is restored. The two Elders are put to death as punishment.
* The Babylonians worship an idol called Bel whom requires a large amount of offerings everyday. The cult of Bel and his food consumption is a sham; the offerings are sent through a “hidden entrance” beneath the table through which the priests and their families “used to go in regularly and consume the provisions” (14:13). Daniel exposes this sham by sprinkling ashes all over the floor before the priests and their families return. The king puts the priests and their families to death and gives Bel over to Daniel, whom destroys it and its temple.
* The king of Babylon allows Daniel to feed the dragon with a special “cake”. The dragon bursts open after consuming it. This proves that the dragon is not a god at all. When the Babylonians find out, they become very angry and attack the king, demanding Daniel to be handed over to them. They throw Daniel in the lions’ den. The Lord “took [Habak’kuk] by the crown of his head, and lifted him by his hair and set him down in Babylon” (14:36). He gives Daniel his dinner before being returned home. On the seventh day, the king is amazed by how God has protected Daniel. The king releases Daniel but throws the ones who “attempted his destruction” into the den.
 | Dan 13-14Dan 13:1-63Dan 14:1-22Dan 14:23-43 |
| **B** | **The Two Elders’ Lust for Susanna*** Chapters 13 & 14 survive only in Greek translations of the OT, but it is probable that they were originally written in Greek or Aramaic. Neither chapter is included in the canon of the bible accepted by rabbinic Judaism and historic Protestantism, but the Catholic Church considers them as God’s inspired word and revelation. (Who determines the canon of the bible? Refer to Catechism Lecture #3.)
* Key point #2: 1. Virtue (chastity) triumphs over vice (lust and deceit). 2. A story that celebrates the hero’s God-given wisdom righting the wrong.
* 1st Interpretation: The “offspring of Canaan” represents fornicators according to Jewish culture. The two evil Elders would symbolize the pagans and the apostate Jews during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who tried to make the Jews (here symbolized by Susanna) fall into the sin of apostasy from Yahweh. Their actions reveal their unfaithfulness towards God. The “daughters of Israel”, representing the Samaritans, are easily seduced by the alluring pagan Hellenism. The “daughter of Judah” (Susanna) heroically chooses not to betray God as she proclaims, “It is better for me to fall into your power without guilt than to sin before the Lord” (Dan 13:23). This reflects the sentiments of the Maccabean martyrs.
* 2nd Interpretation: Susanna and her husband, Jo’akim, represent the Church and Christ. The two evil Elders represent attackers of the Church and those who falsely accused the righteous; however, they fight among themselves.
* “And they watched eagerly, day after day, to see her”: The difference between attraction and lust.
 | Dan 13:1-63CSB, NJBC 25:35SK p 1NJBC 66:9-10, 20NJBC 25:36CSB 13:52-59Mt 5:27-28, SN1 |
| **C** | **Daniel’s Refusal to Worship Bel*** Astyages was the last king of Media, who ruled from 585 to 550 B.C., when Cyrus II of Persia overthrew the Medes and incorporated their realm into his own.
* This story is another folktale of the “Daniel Cycle”. It is a Jewish satire on the crudities of idolatry, although actually it is a caricature of pagan worship. The offering of food and drink in sacrifice to pagan gods did not differ substantially from similar offerings made to Yahweh in the Temple. In both cases, a certain amount of the sacrificial offerings went quite legitimately to the priests and their families. However, the difference is about whether humanity accepts God as the only God and the idol as the prototype of false god.
* Destroying the dragon is similar to the story in Dan 6 where Daniel refuses to worship idols. Both focus on refusing idolatry and in both cases, Daniel ends up in the lions’ den. Prophet Habakkuk lived around 600 B.C., therefore, quite impossible to appear during the time of Cyrus. It is believed that the author might have the name. The great dragon, “which the Babylonians revered” could mean a crocodile of a giant serpent (14:23).
 | Dan 14:1-43CSB NJBC 25:37NJBC 25:38 |

**SPECIAL NOTES**

1. “Only when lust has gained possession of the will is it possible to say that it is dominant over the subjectivity of the person...Through that possibility –by virtue of self-decision or self-determination –the very way of existing with regard to another person is established. Only then…is it possible to confirm…about the man dominated by lust.” (JPII, General audience of September 24, 1980)

**Special Notes:**

From the Exile to the Roman Period

| Years/Periods | Events/Characters | Remarks |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 587-550 | Babylonian Exile.  | Daniel in the East until 537, 3rd year after Cyrus II of Persia conquered Babylon (CSB p.17) |
| 550-330 | The Persian Period – In 550-538, Cyrus of Persia conquered Medes, Lydia and Babylon. Edict issued to allow all Jews to go home. Empire ended by Alexander the Great in 330. | Ezra expelled Jews married to “people of the land” (descendants of Jews left behind in 721/586 & of refugees from other areas deported to Palestine). They built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim and became the Samaritans. Avowed policy of separatism continues to this day. |
| 330-63 BC | The Greek Period * 336-323 Alexandrian empire.
* Seleucus ruled Syria and Babylon from Antioch, Ptolemy ruled Egypt from Alexandria.
* Israel under Ptolemy till 199
* Then under Seleucus.
* Antiochus Epiphanes IV desecrated the Temple in 167.
* 167-63 MacCabaean revolt and Hasmonaean dynasty.
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| 63-> | The Roman Period* 67 BC Pompey took Antioch and Damascus, entered the Holy of Holies, made Hyrcanus (Edomite) ethnarch.
* Julius Caesar, Octavian/Anthony(Cleopatra), King Herod the Great.
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References: David Stacey, *Ground Work of Biblical Studies*, Epworth Press, 1979, pp.132-138.

SK, pp.2019 ff.