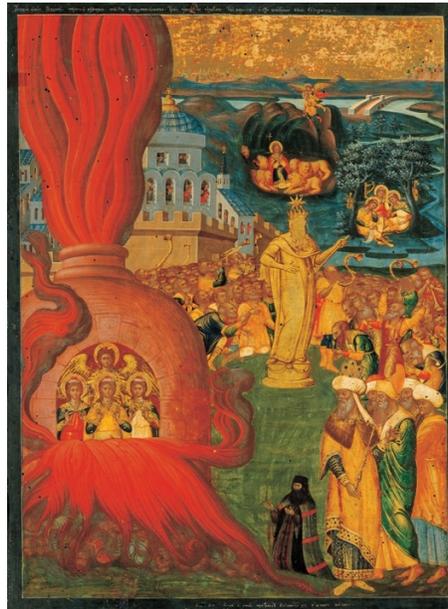


Introduction to the Apocrypha – The Daniel Additions - Session One



The story of Daniel and the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace (Icon)

Adrianoupolis Konstantinos, 1725 - 1750

Introduction to The Apocrypha; The Book of Daniel (1:1 – 3:23); The Prayer of Azariah

The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books

The apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books are those works that were included in the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, referred to as LXX) or in the Old Latin and Vulgate translations, but are not included in the Hebrew text that forms both the canon for Judaism and the Protestant Old Testament. All of these works, whether they are individual books or additions to the Hebrew texts of Esther and Daniel, have been regarded as canonical by one or more Christian communities, but not by all. (The exception is 4 Maccabees, which appears only in an appendix to the Greek Bible.)

“Apocrypha means “hidden things,” but it is not clear why the term was chosen to describe these books. In antiquity “hidden books” sometimes referred to books that were restricted because they contained mysterious or esoteric teaching, too profound to be communicated to any except the initiated. Some early Christian writers used the term to describe works they considered to be spurious or

heretical. But neither usage aptly describes the set of books that now goes by this name. The use of the term to refer to this group of books can be traced to the Christian scholar Jerome at the turn of the fifth century C.E. It serves to distinguish them from books of the Christian Old Testament that are also found in the Jewish canon.

“Deuterocanonical,” along with its coordinate term “protocanonical,” is used in Roman Catholic tradition to describe the status of the two groups of books of the Old Testament. The “protocanon” consists of the books of the Hebrew Bible, concerning which there was no debate as to their canonical status. The “Deuterocanon” refers to those additional books whose canonical status was reaffirmed at a later date. This distinction introduced by Sixtus of Sienna in 1566, acknowledges the differences between the two categories while making clear that Roman Catholics accept as fully canonical those books and parts of books that Protestants call the Apocrypha (except the Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, 3 and 4 Maccabees, and 1 and 2 Esdras, which both groups regard as apocryphal). Thus, although the terms “Deuterocanonical” and “Apocryphal” can describe the same collections of writings, they clearly indicate the differences in status of the writings among different groups. In the NRSV translation, subheadings in the table of contents for these books, and in the text itself, explain the differing canonical status of various writings.

– from the New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha – New Revised Standard Version

The Books of the Apocrypha

The Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Canons of the Old Testament

| | Roman Catholic | Greek Orthodox | (Russian Orthodox) | Latin Vulgate Appendix | Greek Appendix | Protestant Anglican Apocrypha |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Tobit | * | * | * | | | * |
| Judith | * | * | * | | | * |
| Additions to Esther | * | * | * | | | * |
| Wisdom of Solomon | * | * | * | | | * |
| Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) | * | * | * | | | * |
| Baruch | * | * | * | | | * |
| Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch Ch. 6) | * | * | * | | | * |
| Additions to Daniel | * | * | * | | | * |
| 1 Maccabees | * | * | * | | | * |
| 2 Maccabees | * | * | * | | | * |
| 1 Esdras | | * | * | * | | * |
| Prayer of Manasseh | | * | * | * | | * |
| Psalms 151 | | * | * | | | |
| 3 Maccabees | | * | * | | | |
| 2 Esdras | | | * | * | | * |
| 4 Maccabees | | | | | * | |

The Prayer of Azariah

¹ They walked around in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the LORD ² Then Azariah stood still in the fire and prayed aloud:

³ "Blessed are you, O LORD, God of our
ancestors, and worthy of praise;
and glorious is your name forever!

⁴ For you are just in all you have done;
all your works are true and your ways right,
and all your judgments are true.

⁵ You have executed true judgements in all
you have brought upon us
and upon Jerusalem, the holy city of our ancestors;
by a true judgement you have brought all
this upon us because of our sins.

⁶ For we have sinned and broken your law
in turning away from you;
in all matters we have sinned grievously

⁷ We have not obeyed your commandments,
We have not kept them or done what
You have commanded us for our own good.

⁸ So all that you have brought upon us,
And all that you have done to us,
You have done by a true judgment.

⁹ You have handed us over to our enemies,
lawless and hateful rebels,
and to an unjust king, the most wicked
in all the world.

¹⁰ And now we cannot open our mouths;
We, your servants who worship you,
Have become a shame and a reproach.

¹¹ For your name's sake do not give us up forever,
and do not annul your covenant.

¹² Do not withdraw your mercy from us,
for the sake of Abraham your beloved
and for the sake of your servant Isaac

- and Israel your holy one,
¹³ to whom you promised
to multiply their descendants like the stars of heaven
and the sand on the shore of the sea.
- ¹⁴ For we, O LORD, have become fewer than any other nation,
and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins.
- ¹⁵ In our day we have no ruler, or prophet, or leader,
no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense,
no place to make an offering before you
and to find mercy.
- ¹⁶ Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted,
¹⁷ as though it were with burnt offerings of rams and bulls,
or with tens of thousands of fat lambs;
such may our sacrifices be in your sight today,
and may we unreservedly follow you,
for no shame will come to those who trust in you.
- ¹⁸ And now with all our heart we follow you;
we fear you and seek your presence.
- ¹⁹ Do not put us to shame,
but deal with us in your patience and in your abundant mercy.
- ²⁰ Deliver us in accordance with your marvelous works,
and bring glory to your name, O LORD.
- ²¹ Let all who do harm to your servants be put to shame;
let them be disgraced and deprived of all power,
and let their strength be broken.
- ²² Let them know that you alone are the LORD God,
glorious over the whole world.”

The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews is generally inserted in Chapter 3 of the book of *Daniel*, between verse 23 and 24. They were probably written in the second (or possibly first) century b.c.e.

The Furnace

In chapters 2 and 3 of *Daniel*, Nebuchadnezzar falls into rages easily. In this chapter (3), even his anger may reinforce the emphasis on his absolute power, for what could be more terrifying than the rage of someone who could do to a person anything he wished? He does not indulge in torture, however, but takes the rather ineffectual course of having the furnace heated seven times hotter than was customary – not that they had gauges; the number is used for effect. How that would have made the Jews' fate worse is not explained; the order seems to reveal an irrational reaction to this challenge to his authority. In fact, it rebounds in that some of his soldiers are killed. Some commentators are troubled by the injustice of it, for the guilty ones, the Jews, go free while soldiers who are just doing their duty, are killed. Here is another reflection of how it is in real life, however.

Discussions of the probable shape of the furnace may be found in other commentaries, but they are hypothetical and of no great importance for understanding the text. All we need to know is that there was an open door through which the king expected to see the immolation of these former officials who had dared to challenge him.

– Donald E. Gowen (*Daniel – Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries*)

The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, New Revised Standard Version – Fully Revised Fourth Edition, Michael D. Coogan, Editor, Amy-Jill Levine, Contributor, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2010

Daniel, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, Donald E. Gowan, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2001

Session Two: Background on the period of the exile and the Second Temple period; *The Song of the Three Jews*