

Chapter 13 [The story of Susanna]

Servants' preparation:

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<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-13-story-of-susanna>

Read the chapter from Coptic reader or use this link → https://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_7-Daniel.html#Chapter%2013

Remember last chapter:

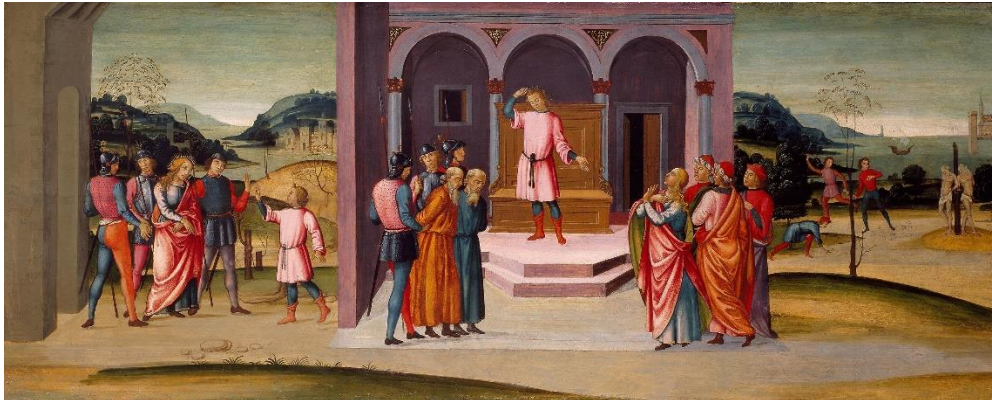
Last chapter, we ended the last vision of Daniel which extended over 3 chapters, he described the Resurrection of the dead and judgment day where everyone would go to his/her eternal life either in heaven if their names were written in the book of life or in hell.

Chapter summary:

Susanna was a wealthy woman who although was well connected and known to be an upstanding woman, she was manipulated by two elders and judges of the court when she refused to agree to do wrong things with them.

As retaliation, they falsely accused her of adultery with another man and she was put on trial for death. Just when she was sentenced and all looked bleak, the faithful young Daniel, (before the story of the lion's den), spoke up when prompted by the Holy Spirit. His method of discerning the truth of the matter saved Susanna's life.

Chapter details:



- The Holy Bible provides us with several examples of women who can be taken as role models. Through their holy lives, they teach us how to persevere in our own daily lives. Susanna, the wife of Joachim was one such example, who although is only mentioned in short chapter in the Book of Daniel, provides for the modern married woman a large number of lessons. Susanna, being an ideal model of purity, faithfulness, long-suffering, decency, and reliance on God, is the subject of this article.

- Susanna was a beautiful and deeply religious woman married to a very wealthy man, Joakim and daughter to Hilkiah.
- They had lovely gardens that Susanna chose to walk in each day.
- There were two judges who held court at the residence of Joakim who lusted after the beautiful Susanna.
- One day they followed her to the garden where she decided to take a bath. She requested her servants lock the gate so that she could be alone, unaware that the two judges were hiding and watching her. When the servants left the judges forced themselves upon to do evil with her. They told her that if she didn't comply, they would take her to court for adultery saying that they saw her alone with a young man.
- She chose not to comply and began screaming; when her servants heard her, they came running. The men told their side of the story and Susanna was taken to court the next day.
- The judges are caught in a lie because young Daniel yelled out in opposition to the charges against Susanna. He would not be a party to her death without proof of her guilt.
- He directed the court to separate the two judges and question them individually. So, they did and because of a discrepancy in their individual testimonies regarding the type of "tree" the lovers were standing under as they committed their crime, the judges were caught in their lie.
- The story indicates that Daniel was directed by divine guidance and was not willing to be pleased with her execution. He was brave enough to speak up and change the course of the narrative.

Susanna's Upbringing

- Susanna was the daughter of Hilkiah who was described as a God-fearing man (Daniel 13:2, NAB).
- Her parents were both just and were careful to teach their daughter the Law of Moses. They preserved her chastity given they were living in the land of captivity and were surrounded with ungodly practices.
- Susanna was careful throughout her life not to show herself in public (Daniel 13:7, NAB), she was decent and careful in her dress and behavior.

Susanna's Family and Husband

- Susanna was married to Joakim for several years and was fruitful in his house. In the manner of her parents, she was a living example to her children and those around her.
- This must be considered in the circumstances surrounding Susanna and her family: her faith was strong in the land of captivity, surrounded with evil and immorality, yet she sheltered herself and her children in her home and did not expose herself to any unrighteousness.
- It was remarkable that given the weight of the punishment and the severity of the accusation against Susanna, the children were allowed to accompany their loved mother to her judgement, it shows the absolute trust Joakim had towards Susanna as he allowed his children to support her.
- Joakim, being full of wisdom must have heard of the accusation the day of the incident and did not rush to conclusions nor arising hazardous suspicions.

Her Purity and the Sin

Susanna was an example of Joseph the righteous, who in the like manner resisted Potiphar wife's temptation and saw it better to please God rather than men.

It was best to honor God rather than men. Her sole reason to refute their demands was she did not want to sin in the sight of God, and by raising her voice for pleading for help, took an active approach to protecting her purity, just as Joseph did by fleeing.

The truth revealed:

It was God who through Daniel defended for her and exposed the evil of the two judges.

Daniel was still a youth, probably few years after arriving to Babylon and finishing all the 3 years of training at the palace. He was not known for being wise yet and the elders could have easily ignored his comment during this trial but it was all planned by God that they sarcastically ask him to show why the verdict was wrong.

God used Susanna as a tool to rectify the evil of the two judges who oppressed many innocent people through unjust judgements.

Susanna's innocence was a stamp on her conduct and lifestyle before all people, who through witnessing her trial and outcome may have repented from their ways.

In like manner, we too must live a life which is conducive of purity and righteousness to thereby set an example to those around us.

May we learn the life of purity and take Susanna as a righteous example and model to which we should match in our lives such as to bring ourselves and those around us to the glory of God.

Life application: [Let your eyes look towards heaven]

Read how the two elders started their sinful act:

“They perverted their thinking; they would not allow their eyes to look to heaven and did not keep in mind just judgments” (Dn 13:9).

- This is how sin works in us. This is how we allow sin to corrupt our thoughts, our actions, and our lives. It begins with temptation, but temptation alone is not enough. Those elders did not stop at wanting to sin with her, they started looking at her then planning how to find a time she was alone.
- There is a difference between being tempted and committing sins.
- This line from Daniel shows us what must happen within us before the temptation can become actual sin. The elders perverted [twisted] their thinking.
- Note: this is not something that passively happened — they intentionally twisted their own thoughts, in order to convince themselves that what they knew to be wrong was in fact right. How did they do this? By not allowing their eyes to look to heaven.
- This is the most critical line of the passage. By not looking to heaven, they avoid the light of goodness and truth. Had they looked to heaven, the darkness of their evil desires would have been revealed. Their guilt would have been undeniable.
- There are two ways to end the pain of a guilty conscience: turn away from sin or turn away from the light. They turned away from the light.
- By contrast we have Susanna, who never takes her eyes off God. She understands the urgent nature of her situation. Either she commits adultery with these men and escape punishment; or refuse and be punished for the very crime she refused to commit.
- Looked at from a purely worldly perspective, it would seem better for Susanna to commit the sinful act and save her own life than to be killed for not doing it.

- But Susanna does not have a worldly perspective. Her perspective is that of heaven.
- “If I yield, it will be my death; if I refuse, I cannot escape your power. Yet it is better for me not to do it and to fall into your power than to sin before the Lord” (Dn 13:23).
- There is no fate worse in Susanna’s mind than to sin against God. Such an act would be a betrayal of His love.
- What I want to highlight here is that through all of her trials, Susanna never took her eyes off of God.
- She actually did not argue with her accusers nor ask God to prove her innocence, she just laid the problem in front of Him in prayer and left Him to take care of the matter. She told God that she did not do anything wrong and that she will die. If a kid runs to his father telling him, he will be punished but he is innocent, there is no need to ask for help, his father will sure jump into the problem and save him.
- Just like Saint Mary at the wedding of Cana, she told Jesus, they have no wine. Let us learn this nice prayer, when we pass through problems, we just tell God how we feel and let Him find the best way to deal with it.
- In Suzanna’s story, it says, God heeded her prayers. We know that He called Daniel at that moment to help her.
- When faced with temptation, all the knowledge in the world won’t help us if we turn away our eyes from heaven. We hide God from our sight (thinking wrongly that that will hide us from His) and find a way in our minds to justify our sin.
- May we take these lessons from today’s story and apply them to our lives. May we keep our eyes ever on God, so that our hearts may be filled with the courage needed to resist evil, and an infallible trust in His goodness.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 13:9 “They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven”

