

BEL AND THE DRAGON

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1 And king Astyages was gathered to his fathers, and Cyrus of Persia received his kingdom. 2 And Daniel conversed with the king, and was honoured above all his friends. 3 Now the Babylonians had an idol, called Bel, and there were spent upon him every day twelve great measures of fine flour, and forty sheep, and six vessels of wine. 4 And the king worshipped it and went daily to adore it: but Daniel worshipped his own God. And the king said to him, Why do not you worship Bel? 5 Who answered and said, Because I may not worship idols made with hands, but the living God, who has created the heaven and the earth, and has sovereignty over all flesh. 6 Then said the king to him, Thinkest you not that Bel is a living God? see you not how much he eats and drinks every day? 7 Then Daniel smiled, and said, O king, be not deceived: for this is but clay within, and brass without, and did never eat or drink any thing. 8 So the king was angry, and called for his priests, and said to them, If you° tell me not who this is that devours these expenses, you° shall die. 9 But if you° can certify me that Bel devours them, then Daniel shall die: for he has spoken blasphemy against Bel. And Daniel said to the king, Let it be according to your word. 10 Now the priests of Bel were threescore and ten, beside their wives and children. And the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. 11 So Bel's priests said, Behold, we go out: but you, O king, set on the meat, and make ready the wine, and shut the door fast and seal it with your own signet; 12 And to morrow when you come in, if you find not that Bel has eaten up all, we will suffer death: or else Daniel, that speaks falsely against us. 13 And they little regarded it: for under the table they had made a privy entrance, whereby they entered in continually, and consumed those things. 14 So when they were gone forth, the king set meats before Bel. Now Daniel had commanded his servants to bring ashes, and those they strewed throughout all the temple in the presence of the king alone: then they went out, and shut the door, and sealed it with the king's signet, and so departed. 15 Now in the night came the priests with their wives and children, as they were wont to do, and did eat and drink up all. 16 In the morning betime the king arose, and Daniel with him. 17 And the king said, Daniel, are the seals whole? And he said, Yes, O king, they be whole. 18 And as soon as he had opened the door, the king looked upon the table, and cried with a loud voice, Great are you, O Bel, and with you is no deceit at all. 19 Then laughed Daniel, and held the king that he should not go in, and said, Behold now the pavement, and mark well whose footsteps are these. 20 And the king said, I see the footsteps of men, women, and children. And then the king was angry, 21 And took the priests with their wives and children, who showed him the privy doors, where they came in, and consumed such things as were upon the table. 22 Therefore the king killed them, and delivered Bel into Daniel's power, who destroyed him and his temple. 23 And in that same place there was a great dragon, which they of Babylon worshipped. 24 And the king said to Daniel, Will you also say that