

BEL AND THE DRAGON.

Contents

Bel and the Dragon.

1 AND king Astyages was gathered to his fathers, and Cyrus the Persian received his kingdom. ² And Daniel lived 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 firkins of wine. ⁴ And the king did honour to it, and went daily to worship it: but Daniel worshipped his own God. And the king said unto him, Why dost thou not worship Bel? ⁵ And he said, Because I may not do honour to idols made with hands, but to the living God, who hath created the heaven and the earth, and hath sovereignty over all flesh. ⁶ Then said the king unto him, Thinkest thou not that Bel is a living god? or seest thou not how much he eateth and drinketh every day? ⁷ Then Daniel laughed, and said, O king, be not deceived: for this is but clay within, and brass without, and did never eat or drink anything. ⁸ So the king was wroth, and called for his priests, and said unto them, If ye tell me not who this is that devoureth these expenses, ye shall die. ⁹ But if ye can shew me that Bel devoureth them, then Daniel shall die: for he hath spoken blasphemy against Bel. And Daniel said unto the king, Let it be according to thy 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, Lo, we will get us out: but thou, O king, set on the meat, and mingle the wine and set it forth, and shut the door fast, and seal it with thine own signet; ¹² and when thou comest in the morning, if thou find not that Bel hath eaten up all, we will suffer death: or else Daniel, that speaketh 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 And it came to pass, when they were gone forth, the king set the meat before Bel. Now Daniel had commanded his servants to bring ashes, and they strewed all the temple with them in the presence of the king alone: then went they 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, Yea, 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 art thou, O Bel, and with thee 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 shewed him the privy doors, where they came in, and consumed such things as were upon the table. ²² Therefore the king slew them, and delivered Bel into Daniel's power, who overthrew him and his temple.

23 And in that same place there was a great ¹ dragon, which they of Babylon worshipped. ²⁴ And the king said unto Daniel, Wilt thou also say that this is of brass? lo, he liveth, and eateth and drinketh; thou canst not say that he is no living god: therefore worship him. ²⁵ Then said Daniel, I will worship the Lord my God: for he is a living God. ²⁶ But give me leave, O king, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff. The king said, I give thee leave. ²⁷ Then Daniel took pitch, and fat, and hair, and did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof: this he put in the dragon's mouth, so the dragon did eat and burst in sunder: and Daniel said, Lo, these are the gods ye worship. ²⁸ When they of Babylon heard that, they took great indignation, and conspired against the king, saying, The king is become a Jew, and he hath pulled down Bel, and slain the dragon, and put the priests to the sword. ²⁹ So they came to the king, and said, Deliver us Daniel, or else we will destroy thee and thine house. ³⁰ Now when the king saw that they pressed him sore, being constrained, the king delivered Daniel unto them: ³¹ who cast him into the lion's den: where he was six days. ³² And in the den there were seven lions, and they had given them every day two carcasses, and two sheep: which then were not given to them, to the intent they might devour Daniel.

33 Now there was in Jewry the prophet ² Habakkuk, who had made pottage, and had broken bread into a bowl, and was going into the field, for to bring it to the reapers. ³⁴ But the angel of the Lord said unto Habakkuk, Go carry the dinner that thou hast into Babylon unto Daniel, in the lions' den. ³⁵ And Habakkuk said, Lord, I never saw Babylon; neither do I know where the den is. ³⁶ Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown, and lifted him up by the hair of his head, and with the blast of his breath set him in Babylon over the den. ³⁷ And Habakkuk cried, saying, O Daniel, Daniel, take the dinner which God hath sent thee. ³⁸ And Daniel said, Thou hast remembered me, O God: neither hast thou forsaken them that love thee. ³⁹ So Daniel arose, and did eat: and the angel of God set Habakkuk in his own place again immediately. ⁴⁰ Upon the seventh day the king came to bewail Daniel: and when he came to the den, he looked in, and, behold, Daniel was sitting. ⁴¹ Then cried the king with a loud voice, saying, Great art thou, O Lord, thou God of Daniel, and there is none other beside thee. ⁴² And he drew him out, and cast those that were the cause of his destruction into the den: and they were devoured in a moment before his face.

¹+ 1:23 Or, serpent

²+ 1:33 Gr. Ambakoum.