

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.

