

Bel and the Dragon

Bel.1

[1] When King Astyages was laid with his fathers, Cyrus the Persian received his kingdom.

[2] And Daniel was a companion of the king, and was the most honored of his friends.

[3] Now the Babylonians had an idol called Bel, and every day they spent on it twelve bushels of fine flour and forty sheep and fifty gallons of wine.

[4] The king revered it and went every day to worship it. But Daniel worshiped his own God.

[5] And the king said to him, "Why do you not worship Bel?" He answered, "Because I do not revere man-made idols, but the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all flesh."

[6] The king said to him, "Do you not think that Bel is a living God? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?"

[7] Then Daniel laughed, and said, "Do not be deceived, O king; for this is but clay inside and brass outside, and it never ate or drank anything."

[8] Then the king was angry, and he called his priests and said to them, "If you do not tell me who is eating these provisions, you shall die.

[9] But if you prove that Bel is eating them, Daniel shall die, because he blasphemed against Bel." And Daniel said to the king, "Let it be done as you have said."

[10] Now there were seventy priests of Bel, besides their wives and children. And the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel.

[11] And the priests of Bel said, "Behold, we are going outside; you yourself, O king, shall set forth the food and mix and place the wine, and shut the door and seal it with your signet.

[12] And when you return in the morning, if you do not find that Bel has eaten it all, we will die; or else Daniel will, who is telling lies about us."

[13] They were unconcerned, for beneath the table they had made a hidden entrance, through which they used to go in regularly and consume the provisions.

[14] When they had gone out, the king set forth the food for Bel. Then Daniel ordered his servants to bring ashes and they sifted them throughout the whole temple in the presence of the king alone. Then they went out, shut the door and sealed it with the king's signet, and departed.

[15] In the night the priests came with their wives and children, as they were accustomed to do, and ate and drank everything.

[16] Early in the morning the king rose and came, and Daniel with him.

[17] And the king said, "Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?" He answered, "They are unbroken, O king."

[18] As soon as the doors were opened, the king looked at the table, and shouted in a loud voice, "You are great, O Bel; and with you there is no deceit, none at all."

[19] Then Daniel laughed, and restrained the king from going in, and said, "Look at the floor, and notice whose footsteps these are."

[20] The king said, "I see the footsteps of men and women and children."

[21] Then the king was enraged, and he seized the priests and their wives and children; and they showed him the secret doors through which they were accustomed to enter and devour what was on the table.

[22] Therefore the king put them to death, and gave Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed it and its temple.

[23] There was also a great dragon, which the Babylonians revered.

[24] And the king said to Daniel, "You cannot deny that this is a living god; so worship him."

[25] Daniel said, "I will worship the Lord my God, for he is the living God.

[26] But if you, O king, will give me permission, I will slay the dragon without sword or club." The king said, "I give you permission."

[27] Then Daniel took pitch, fat, and hair, and boiled them together and made cakes, which he fed to the dragon. The dragon ate them, and burst open. And Daniel said, "See what you have been worshiping!"

[28] When the Babylonians heard it, they were very indignant and conspired against the king, saying, "The king has become a Jew; he has destroyed Bel, and slain the dragon, and slaughtered the priests."

[29] Going to the king, they said, "Hand Daniel over to us, or else we will kill you and your household."

[30] The king saw that they were pressing him hard, and under compulsion he handed Daniel over to them.

[31] They threw Daniel into the lions' den, and he was there for six days.

[32] There were seven lions in the den, and every day they had been given two human bodies and two sheep; but these were not given to them now, so that they might devour Daniel.

[33] Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judea. He had boiled pottage and had broken bread into a bowl, and was going into the field to take it to the reapers.

[34] But the angel of the Lord said to Habakkuk, "Take the dinner which you have to Babylon, to Daniel, in the lions' den."

[35] Habakkuk said, "Sir, I have never seen Babylon, and I know nothing about the den."

[36] Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head, and lifted him by his hair and set him down in Babylon, right over the den, with the rushing sound of the wind itself.

[37] Then Habakkuk shouted, "Daniel, Daniel! Take the dinner which God has sent you."

[38] And Daniel said, "Thou hast remembered me, O God, and hast not forsaken those who love thee."

[39] So Daniel arose and ate. And the angel of God immediately returned Habakkuk to his own place.

[40] On the seventh day the king came to mourn for Daniel. When he came to the den he looked in, and there sat Daniel.

[41] And the king shouted with a loud voice, "Thou art great, O Lord God of Daniel, and there is no other besides thee."

[42] And he pulled Daniel out, and threw into the den the men who had attempted his destruction, and they were devoured immediately before his eyes.