

## Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

The Philistines set up the ark in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod; whose image is found next morning prostrate before it, broken in pieces, 1 Samuel 5:1-5. The Philistines are also smitten with a sore disease, 1 Samuel 5:6. The people of Ashdod refuse to let the ark stay with them; and the lords of the Philistines, with whom they consulted, order it to be carried to Gath, 1 Samuel 5:7, 1 Samuel 5:8. They do so; and God smites the inhabitants of that city, young and old, with the same disease, 1 Samuel 5:9. They send the ark to Ekron, and a heavy destruction falls upon that city, and they resolve to send it back to Shiloh, 1 Samuel 5:10-12.

## Verse 1

Brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod - Ashdod or Azotus was one of the five satrapies or lordships of the Philistines.

## Verse 2

The house of Dagon - On this idol, which was supposed to be partly in a human form, and partly in that of a fish, see the note on Judges 16:23. Some think that this idol was the same with Dirceto, Attergatis, the Venus of Askalon, and the Moon. - See Calmet's Dissertation on the gods of the Philistines.

The motive which induced the Philistines to set up the ark in the temple of Dagon, may be easily ascertained. It was customary, in all nations, to dedicate the spoils taken from an enemy to their gods:

1.As a gratitude-offering for the help which they supposed them to have furnished; and,

2.As a proof that their gods, i.e., the gods of the conquerors, were more powerful than those of the conquered.

It was, no doubt, to insult the God of Israel, and to insult and terrify his people, that they placed his ark in the temple of Dagon. When the Philistines had conquered Saul, they hung up his armor in the temple of Ashtaroth, 1 Samuel 31:10. And when David slew Goliath, he laid up his sword in the tabernacle of the Lord, 1 Samuel 21:8, 1 Samuel 21:9. We have the remains of this custom in the depositing of colors, standards, etc., taken from an enemy, in our churches; but whether this may be called superstition or a religious act, is hard to say. If the battle were the Lord's, which few battles are, the dedication might be right.

## Verse 3

They of Ashdod arose early on the morrow - Probably to perform some act of their superstition in the temple of their idol.

Dagon was fallen upon his face - This was one proof, which they little expected, of the superiority of the God of Israel.

Set him in his place again - Supposing his fall might have been merely accidental.

## Verse 4

Only the stump of Dagon was left - Literally, Only  $\text{x}^{\text{u}}\text{x}^{\text{y}}$  (dagon) (i.e., the little fish) was left. It has already been remarked that Dagon had the head, arms and hands of a man or woman, and that the rest of the idol was in the form of a fish, to which Horace is supposed to make allusion in the following words: -

Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne

â€œThe upper part resembling a beautiful woman; the lower, a fish.â€•

All that was human in his form was broken off from what resembled a fish. Here was a proof that the affair was not accidental; and these proofs of God's power and authority prepared the way for his judgments.

## Verse 5

Tread on the threshold - Because the arms, etc., of Dagon were broken off by his fall on the threshold, the threshold became sacred, and neither his priests nor worshippers ever tread on the threshold. Thus it was ordered, in the Divine providence, that, by a religious custom of their own, they should perpetuate their disgrace, the insufficiency of their worship, and the superiority of the God of Israel.

It is supposed that the idolatrous Israelites, in the time of Zephaniah, had adopted the worship of Dagon: and that in this sense 1 Samuel 1:9 is to be understood: In the same day will I punish all those who leap upon the threshold. In order to go into such temples, and not tread on the threshold, the people must step or leap over them; and in this way the above passage may be understood. Indeed, the thresholds of the temples in various

