

RE-ASSEMBLING & RE-ERECTING DAGON

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During the days of Samuel the Prophet and Eli the High Priest, the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. The Philistines carried their trophy to Ashdod, took it into the temple of their fish-god, Dagon, and placed it at the feet of their idol -presumably to show that Dagon, the god of the Philistines, was greater than Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Yahweh decided to supernaturally cast down their vain imagination right away. Early the next morning when the Philistines entered the temple of Dagon, behold, Dagon was down on his face before the Ark of Yahweh. The fish-god had fallen in homage to worship Yahweh.

The Philistines stood Dagon back up so he towered over the Ark again. So Yahweh had to show them again who was greater. The next morning, Dagon was once again down on his face before the Ark. This time, though, Dagon was broken into pieces. His head and hands were broken off, and only the stump remained.

This story is a simple yet vivid illustration of what happens when we come into the presence of the One who dwelt on the Ark. In His presence, all "false gods" must fall. All of our personal opinions, pet doctrines, and ideas based on mere human reasoning and speculation must bow and yield to Him.

It usually happens this way. As we read, pray, study, and meditate on the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit enlightens and quickens something in the Scriptures to show us the folly and error of some idea which we believe to be true. Thus our vain imagination is cast down. Then what do we do? Often we do like the Philistines did with Dagon. We set Dagon back up. We see our cherished belief cast down, and we say to ourselves, "Surely I couldn't be mistaken about that!" We don't want to humble ourselves and admit the sad truth that



we have been in error, perhaps for most of our life. So we look for some way to raise Dagon back up to his former position.

We see that our view is proven wrong by the Scriptures, but we look for some way to re-establish it in our mind. We try to find a preacher or a church that agrees with the error that we want to hold onto. Or, we search for a Bible verse to support our erroneous belief. If we look long enough and hard enough, we will find a statement somewhere in the Bible that can be used to re-establish our erroneous thinking. The only problem is that the Bible verse has to be divorced from its immediate context and isolated from the rest of the Bible in order for us to read into it our own erroneous idea. The real meaning of the verse has to be twisted to fit our dearly-beloved personal opinion. We ignore what the rest of the Bible says about the topic, and focus only on one or two verses which we have isolated and twisted. Thus the error is re-established in our mind. Dagon is set back up in his place of honor again. We feel relieved because we think our belief is now secure.

However, error cannot exist forever in the presence of the Ark. If we continue to stay in the presence of the Lord, our erroneous idea will eventually be cast down again. This time it will be shattered to pieces like Dagon was.

The Philistines continued to serve Dagon even after he was broken in pieces. "How stupid of them," we think. But were the Philistines any stupider than Christians and Jews who continue to serve false doctrines even after those doctrines have been exposed and shattered to pieces by

the Lord? If the Lord shatters your personal opinions, pet doctrines, and speculations, don't pick up the broken pieces and try to glue Dagon back together. The Philistines in Ashdod continued to serve error while still holding onto the Ark, and God sent a plague. He smote them with tumors which the KJV calls "emerods," the old English word for hemorrhoids. The New Jerusalem Bible says, "The tumors were probably hemorrhoids, which is well in keeping with the rather wry humor of the story."

The Philistines of Ashdod realized that the God of Israel was smiting them with emerods because of the presence of the Ark, so they decided to send the Ark to Gath, another Philistine city. Apparently their thinking was, "We thought this thing was supposed to bring us good luck, but all it's brought us is the shattering of our god and a bad case of hemorrhoids. Send it away!"

This part of the story has its parallel in the way some people deal with the shattering of their errors. If people continue holding on to error even after the Lord has exposed it to them, then His presence will bring them curses instead of blessings. Unfortunately, many people do like the Philistines did when they were smitten with emerods. They send away the presence of the Lord so that they can continue serving their erroneous beliefs. They love their personal opinions, their pet doctrines, and their vain speculations more than they love the presence of the Lord. They grieve and quench the Holy Spirit by holding onto their reassembled and re-erected Dagon, and the presence of the Lord departs from them. The wonderful love, joy, and peace which were formerly experienced soon fade away, and the former lovers of God are left with nothing but their erroneous ideas reestablished in their heads, and "emerods in their secret parts" (1 Sam. 5:9).