

Day 23 – Mar. 1

The power of God is real! Misunderstood, but real. This section of our reading wants to show that in the starkest of terms.

We begin with prophecy fulfilled. Eli and his sons die on the same day as prophesied, a Word from our omniscient God. The Ark of the Covenant carries the glory of God, so that enemies in its presence die or break out in tumors. This is the work of an omnipotent God. Yet we find a misunderstanding among every character in this story. They all assume that God resides in this Ark, and so when the Ark is captured, so is God. When the Ark is present, so is God. God's omnipresence is misunderstood. Yet we know that God was with the Israelites when the Ark was with them AND when it was in the temple of Dagon.

But the Israelites worship a God above all other gods. Dagon, the pagan deity worshiped by the Philistines, is toppled – literally – by the very presence of the Ark of the Covenant. And everywhere this Ark goes, the people are unprotected from God's power and wrath. The tumors described sound like radiation poisoning, but we know that God is even more powerful than that, for this is not a natural reaction. Samuel has been sleeping next to the Ark most of his life, and has no tumors. So this is an intended consequence.

One last note. God's power works through vessels throughout this book. Unlike the wilderness travels where God worked directly, God speaks through Samuel, works through the Ark, and leaves Eli and his sons due to their corruption. This is how God is working again today, through vessels. And as we talk about the state of those vessels – us, if you haven't guessed – we see that God can even use scarred and broken vessels, "crackedpots" if you will, to show His power and glory.

So will we be faithful vessels like Samuel or rejected ones like Eli's sons? I believe that is our choice today.