

MEN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

JUDGES 10:1-5

Text:

Introduction:

Today, we will examine the lives of Tola and Jair. While the Bible has very little to say about these two men, their lives and deeds have much to teach us.

1. THE MESS THEY INHERITED (VS. 1)

Judges 10:1

¹ And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

Verse 1 brings to remember a man by the name of Abimelech.

Abimelech was the son of Gideon by his concubine.

After the death of Gideon, Abimelech determines within himself that he will be the ruler of Israel. He convinces his mother's people, the Shechemites to support him in his quest to become the king of Israel.

The men of Shechem confer among themselves and decide to help Abimelech. They give him seventy pieces of silver, 9:4. Using this money, Abimelech hires a group of thugs to help him achieve his goal, 9:4.

Abimelech takes these men to his father's house and kills 69 of his seventy half-brothers. The youngest, a boy named Jotham escapes. After this, the men of Shechem declare Abimelech to be their king.

After his anointing, Abimelech ruled as the king for three years. In the end, the men of Shechem turned on Abimelech and there was war between them and the followers of Abimelech.

In the midst of an attack upon the walls of Thebez, Abimelech got too close to the wall and a woman threw a piece of a millstone from the wall and hit Abimelech in the head, 9:53.

Knowing that he was dying, Abimelech commanded one of his men to kill him with a sword so that it would not be said that Abimelech had been killed by a woman, 9:54.

By the time Abimelech is dead, the nation of Israel is left in tatters from a vicious civil war.

Military upheaval isn't the only problem the nation faced. The Bible tells us that as soon as Gideon died,

the people of Israel turned their backs on God and gave their worship to the Canaanite fertility god Baal, 8:33-34.

As a result of all these problems, the nation of Israel is in a mess.

This was the nation inherited by Tola and Jair.

Note a couple of principles:

- God Always Has a Remnant

In Israel, things were bad. The nation is at war with itself, and the majority of the people are worshipping idols. In the midst of all that, God still has a faithful remnant.

That fact has not changed! When Elijah entered the valley of depression, he came to believe that he was the only person in the country that was living for God and doing right. He soon found out that God has a remnant in Israel. Elijah is told that there still 7,000 that had not bowed their knees to Baal, 1 Kings 19:18.

1 Kings 19:18

¹⁸ Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

God still has a remnant!

In this day of increasing immorality and rampant wickedness, God still has a faithful people who love Him, serve Him and live for Him.

There are still people who have a prayer closet.

There are still people who believe the Bible is the Word of God.

There are still people who love the church.

There are still people who will tell a lost world about Jesus.

There are still people who sing, shout, testify and honor God.

While this remnant might not be in the majority, they are still here for the glory of God.

- Serving God is not Always Easy, But it's Always Right

It must have been difficult for Tola and Jair as they dealt with the problems left behind by Abimelech and as they dealt with the idolatry of the nation.

It was not an easy day to minister, but they ministered anyway. We could learn a lot from their example.

It's not always easy to walk in the old paths when everyone around us is looking for something new, but it is right!

It isn't always easy to live for the Lord when others around you are living for the world, the flesh and the devil, but it is right!

It isn't always easy to do the right thing when others around you are acting in bad ways, but it is always right!

The fact, we can make a choice to live for God, even when everyone else seems to be going their own way and living for self.

Our duty is not to look to them, but to Him Who perfectly ran His Own race and will enable us to runs ours as well.

Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Hebrews 4:13

¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight:

but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

John 15:4-5

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

2. THE MINISTRY THEY PERFORMED (VS. 1-5)

Judges 10:1-5

¹ And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. ² And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. ³ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. ⁴ And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havothjair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead. ⁵ And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

These two men may not have led any great military campaigns. They might not have commanded great armies. They may not have left a legacy of great spiritual achievements. But, what they did accomplish deserves consideration. What they did still challenges us today.

These men helped maintain peace for nearly 50 years in a nation split apart by war, rebellion and pagan worship. That in itself is no small feat. When there

were no attacks from the outside, they helped prevent the nation from being ripped apart from the inside. Theirs was a ministry of peace in a time of turmoil.

3. THE MESSAGE THEY PREACHED (VS. 1-5)

Judges 10:1-5

¹ And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. ² And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. ³ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. ⁴ And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havothjair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead. ⁵ And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

Tola and Jair served for a total of 45 years. They did not lead armies. They did not build cities. They did not write books. What they did was for more important. These men stood for God in an evil day. Their lives, though little is recorded about them, still preach to us today. Let me show you a few lessons we can learn from these unknown men.

Note:

- Tola” means “Crimson Worm”.

This speaks of the Coccus worm found in oak trees. These worms were used to produce the red dye that used in the articles made for the tabernacle. It comes from the Hebrew root “tala”, which means “to be

clothed in scarlet”. Tola is the son of “Puah”. His name means “light”. Thus, Tola was “the son of light”.

In his names, Tola is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tola was a man who through humble service and self-surrender became the savior of Israel. He reminds us of Jesus Who is “the Light of the World”, John 8:12.

John 8:12

¹² Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Our Savior was literally clothed in scarlet when He gave His life for the sins of the world, Isa. 53:1-6; 52:14.

Isaiah 53:1-6

¹ Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? ² For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 52:14

¹⁴ As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

Jesus even called himself a “worm”, Psa. 22:6.

Psalms 22:6

⁶ But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

Tola reminds us of the Lord Who humbled Himself so that He might save sinners from their sins, Phil. 2:5-8.

Philippians 2:5-8

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

- “Jair” means “the enlightener”.

He reminds of our Lord Who is the “Sun of righteousness”, Mal. 4:2, and “the Light of the World”, John 8:12.

Malachi 4:2

² But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

John 8:12

¹² Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

We are told that Jair was a wealthy man who was able to give all thirty of his sons their own donkeys. He was also able to give each son his own city. In this he reminds of the Lord Jesus Who owns everything and shares everything He owns with us, Rom. 8:17.

Romans 8:17

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Jair is associated with donkeys. The donkey is an animal associated with peace, unlike the horse which is associated with war. Jair was a man of peace in a world filled with turmoil. He speaks of our Savior, Who is “The Prince of Peace”, Isa. 9:6.

Isaiah 9:6

⁶ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

God raised up Jair to bring peace to a nation. God raised up Jesus to bring peace to our souls and to reconcile us to the Lord. Jair had sons who were ambassadors of peace to the nation of Israel. Jesus has children who are His ambassadors of peace and salvation to the entire world, 2 Cor. 5:20.

2 Corinthians 5:20

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

There are other lessons we can learn:

You don't have to be famous to be used by God and to make a difference

You don't have to accomplish great deeds to live an extraordinary life

God can help you make the best of a bad situation

God is honored by a consistent life and honors those who are faithful

Close:

Tola and Jair lived and died in obscurity, but their lives continue to speak to us about our own walk with the Lord. Thus, their lives were not in vain.

Stay the course.

One day, you will reach the end of your earthly journey. When that day comes it will not matter whether you were famous or not.

It will not matter what you achieved in life.

All that will matter is your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

All that will matter is you love for Him, your labor for Him and the life lived for Him.