

# Tola and Jair: Cleaning Up Other People's Messes

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

## Introduction:

- A. Judges 10:1-5
- B. Major judges: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Samuel
  - 1. Military leaders who delivered the nation
- C. Minor judges: Shamgar - 3:31; Tola - 10:1; Jair - 10:3-5; Ibzan - 12:8-10; Elon - 12:11-12; Abdon - 12:13-15
  - 1. Not great military leaders
  - 2. Helped maintain the peace in troubled times

## I. THE MESS THEY INHERITED

- A. Abimelech, the son of Gideon by his concubine - Judges 8:31
  - 1. After the death of Gideon, Abimelech decides by himself that he will be ruler in Israel. He convinces his mother's people, the Shechemites, to support him in his quest to become the king of Israel.
  - 2. Judges 9 - The men of Shechem confer among themselves and decide to help Abimelech. They give him seventy pieces of silver from the temple of Baal, and Abimelech hires a group of thugs to help him
  - 3. Abimelech takes these men to his father's house and kills 69 of his 70 half-brothers, and the youngest, a boy named Jotham, escapes.
  - 4. After this, the men of Shechem declare Abimelech to be king, where he ruled for three years.
  - 5. Later the men of Shechem turned on Abimelech, and civil war begins in Israel - 9:23-49.
  - 6. During an attack upon the walls of Thebez, Abimelech got too close to the wall and a woman threw a piece of stone from the wall and hit him in the head. 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 he had been killed by a woman.
  - 7. Israel is left in tatters from a vicious civil war.
  - 8. 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.
  - 9. This was the nation inherited by Tola and Jair.
- B. God always saves a remnant.
  - 1. The nation is at war with itself, and the majority of the people are worshiping idols.
  - 2. In the midst of all that, God still has a faithful remnant - 1Kings 19:18
- C. Serving God is not always easy, but it is always right.
  - 1. It must have been difficult for Tola and Jair as they dealt with the problems left by Abimelech
  - 2. It serves no purpose to blame the people who made the race more difficult, but to run our own well - Heb. 12:1-3; Phil. 4:13

3. Our world is a mess. We can lay the blame for that anywhere we like. We can blame Washington, we can blame contemporary religion, and we can blame each another. But, at the end of the day, the responsibility rests right here. The people of God are partly to blame for the condition of the world around us. We have stood by silent while the world has embraced evil. The best way to change the world is to teach it the gospel of Christ and baptize it, and we are content to keep house here at the building. It's time for the remnant of the Lord to speak up for truth and right (Rom. 13:11-14). It's time to stand for the family, the home, the church and the community. If we fail to stand for what is important today, we have no right to complain when it is taken from us tomorrow

## II. THE MINISTRY THEY PERFORMED

- A. Tola and Jair did not lead any great military campaigns nor command great armies. They did not have left a legacy of great spiritual achievements. But, what they did accomplish deserves consideration.
  - 1. They maintained the peace for 50 years in a nation split by civil war, rebellion and pagan worship, no small feat.
  - 2. When there were no attacks from the outside, they helped prevent the nation from being ripped apart from the inside, a ministry of peace in a time of turmoil.
  - 3. They preserved the heritage of their nation.
  - 4. They ministered to the faithful remnant in Israel
- B. Tola and Jair did in their day exactly what we are supposed to be doing in our day. They served as salt in a land filled with decay - Matt. 5:13
  - 1. A preserving influence - Salt slows decay and spoilage.
    - a. Gen. 19 - Sodom could have been saved by the preserving influence of just 10 righteous men.
    - b. Prov. 14:34
  - 2. A penetrating influence - Salt will infiltrate whatever it touches. It is an aggressive substance - Acts 8:1, 4, 17:6
  - 3. A purifying influence - Salt has powerful cleansing ability
    - a. 2Kings 2:19-22
    - b. In ancient times, newborn babies were washed in salt to cleanse their bodies and to give firmness to their skin - Ez. 16:4
    - c. Salt in a wound is an ancient remedy to cleanse the area
    - d. Christians' salty influence - Rom. 12:1-2
  - 4. A pleasing influence - Salt adds flavor to food. In fact, there are some foods that are unpalatable without salt - Phil. 1:27
  - 5. A poisoning influence – Salt kills some things: slugs, freshwater fish, grass, bacteria - Judges 9:45
    - a. Christians' influence can dampen sinful conduct around them
  - 6. A promoting influence - Salt creates thirst for water
    - a. Christians have the opportunity to promote a thirst for Jesus.
    - b. We must never give anyone cause to say, "If that is a Christian, then I never want to be one." Instead, our lives ought to motivate people to say, "That is what I want my life to be."

7. A proven influence - Salt reacts with many things it contacts.
  - a. When genuine, New Testament Christianity touches this sinful world, there will be change of some variety. We just need to be sure that we are changing the world, not the other way around
  - b. 1Cor. 15:33

### III. THE MESSAGE THEY TAUGHT

- A. Tola means "crimson worm." This speaks of the Coccus worm found in Mideastern oak trees. These worms were used to produce the red dye that used in the articles made for the tabernacle.
  1. It comes from the Hebrew root "tala", which means "to be clothed in scarlet of the righteous."
  2. Tola is the son of "Puah" which means "light." Thus, Tola was "the son of light"
  3. Remarkable similarities to Jesus
    - a. Tola through humble service and self-surrender became the savior and preserver of Israel.
    - b. Jesus is "the Light of the World" - John 8:12
    - c. Jesus was literally clothed in scarlet during His trial when He gave His life for the sins of the world - Isa. 53:1-6; 52:14.
    - d. Jesus called himself a "worm" - Psalm 22:6
- B. Jair means "the enlightener"
  1. Jesus is the "sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2), and "the Light of the World" (John 8:12).
  2. We are told that Jair had all thirty of his sons ride on donkeys, the humble animal of peace ridden by Jesus into Jerusalem.
  3. He was also able to give each son his own city, like Jesus who owns everything and shares everything with us - Rom. 8:17.
- C. It is not necessary to be famous make a difference
  1. Our duty is to grow where we are planted and to keep doing what God tells us until the Judgment. That will be more than enough
- D. It is not necessary to accomplish great deeds to live an extraordinary life
- E. God will help us make the best of a bad situation
  1. Tola and Jair inherited a country in trouble. God gave them the ability to hold their nation together for nearly 50 years.
  2. Eph. 4:13; 2Cor. 12:9
- F. God is honored by and will honor a consistent life
  1. Tola and Jair did not accomplish anything that stands out, but the length of their judgeship suggests they were consistent - 1Cor. 4:2; Matt. 25:21