

Tola & Jair

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[0 : 00] All right, we'll take your Bibles then and open them to the book of Judges and we're going to get back to our study of that book on Sunday nights.

And we shall briefly cover a somewhat large text tonight and I'm not going to read the entire text but I do want you to look starting with Judges chapter 8 and verse 33.

And really our text goes from that verse, chapter 8 verse 33, all the way through chapter 9 and on into chapter 10.

And really our focus is chapter 10 verses 1 through 5 because there is where we will find the next two judges in the list. And but we really have to consider chapter 9 because that plays into what we're going to discover from these judges in chapter 10.

So starting with verse 33 of chapter 8. So it was as soon as Gideon was dead. Remember we took I don't know how many weeks on Gideon, quite a few.

[1 : 24] Well, he's dead. And as soon as he was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals and with Baal Barith, their God.

Thus, the children of Israel did not remember the Lord, their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. Nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubal, that's Gideon, in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.

Now, remember, Gideon did a lot of good. He was an effective judge to a point. He had problems that were kind of woven all throughout his ministry as deliverer.

And you might recall, though it's been a number of weeks, it didn't exactly end well. So, all right, so there you have kind of the conclusion and what you would expect, or we have come to expect, to happen after a judge dies.

Same thing, nothing new here. Then when you get into chapter 9, And then Abimelech, the son of Jerubal, again that's Gideon, went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem, which is better for you, that all 70 of the sons of Jerubal reign over you, or that one reign over you.

[2 : 58] Which would be better? And you know what he's getting at. Remember that I am your own flesh and bone. And indeed he was. He was half Shechemite and half Israelite.

And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem, and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech. For they said, He is our brother.

He's one of us. And so they gave him 70 shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men.

And they followed him. Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the 70 sons of Jerubal, on one stone.

But Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubal, was left because he hid himself. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Milo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem.

[4 : 09] All right? So this is continuing the story. This is what happens after Gideon, his own son, has now become king of a sort. Now I'm going to skip on over to toward the end of chapter 9.

And I'm not going to read all of this, but I will refer to some of this that I'm skipping. But let's take it up, verse 53. But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.

Then he called quickly to the young man, his armor bearer, and said to him, Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say to me, A woman killed me. So his young man thrust him through, and he died.

And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man to his place. Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his 70 brothers.

And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads. And on them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubel.

[5 : 26] That curse is given in the chapter in chapter 9. I skipped that part. And then chapter 10. After Abimelech there arose to save Israel, Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo.

How would you like to have that name? A man of Issachar, and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim.

He judged Israel 23 years, and he died and was buried in Shamir. After him arose Jothir, a Gileadite, and he judged Israel 22 years.

Now he had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys. They also had 30 towns, which are called Havoth Jair, to this day which are in the land of Gilead.

And Jair died and was buried in Camon. All right. Well, let me just go on verse 6. Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines.

[6 : 58] And they forsook the Lord and did not serve him. All right. Again, something we have learned to expect. All right. Now, very quickly, and I hope I can get through this quick enough, but we've come now to what scholars typically call two minor judges.

These are minor judges. Tola and Jair, or Jair if you prefer. In fact, we've already dealt with one minor judge, Shamgar.

You remember him back in chapter 3. Called a minor judge. All right. Here are two more, and then a little bit later on down the road, however long it takes, we'll have three other minor judges.

There's Ibson. Ibson, that's in chapter 12. And also, Alon, that's in chapter 12. And then, Abdon, in chapter 12.

And because all three of those appear in chapter 12, you know that there's not much said about them. That's why they're called minor judges. And so that's all the minor judges. And minor judges are called that because there's just very little said about them.

[8 : 15] No big military conquests. No great victories. You know, military campaigns and victories. Nothing like that. And so that's the case with the two judges that we have here tonight.

The next two. Now, what can we glean from what little is given us about these next two judges? What can we glean about them? And I'm going to say three things. And the first one really helps us explain what's going on in Israel when God raised these two judges up.

And so the first thing we can glean is this, the mess they inherited. The mess they inherited. Now, I don't want to be insulting, but some of you might be thinking that the pastor has skipped one of the judges.

You might be thinking, what about Abimelech? You know, the successor of Gideon. The son of Gideon. What about Abimelech there in chapter 9?

[9 : 23] I mean, chapter 9 is a long, long chapter. I haven't looked, but I think it may be one of the longest or maybe the longest chapter in the book of Judges. There's a full 57 verses, you know, that we're just kind of, you know, kind of skipping over.

And so what about chapter 9 and Gideon's son Abimelech? I mean, didn't he rule in Israel? Didn't he lead Israel for a time?

Well, I haven't forgotten about Abimelech. And yes, in a sense, he did rule for a short time, three years. I guess that's not a really short time.

There have been a lot of kings over the years and leaders over the years haven't led that long. So three years, but still relatively short, certainly in comparison to the other judges, if you want to call Abimelech a judge.

But you see, his rule and his leadership and his kingship was illegitimate. It didn't count. He was not a judge at all.

[10 : 31] He was not a deliverer of Israel. The fact is, Abimelech was not God's solution to a problem. Abimelech was the problem to which God raised up some judges to fix.

Abimelech was, in a sense, God's judgment. All right, so you see, that is what makes chapter 9 unique in the book of Judges.

It really is. Because just like all the other judges, after Gideon's death, the Bible tells us about Israel's, you know, digression.

Their slip back into idolatry. And I guess we shouldn't call it a slip as if it was somehow gradual. I mean, we get from the language of Scripture that immediately, I mean, the judge dies and boom, they're just right back to where they were.

Rebelling against God, turning from God, worshiping idols and so forth. And so that happens after Gideon's death. And we just read that in verse 33 of chapter 8.

[11:36] So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals. So we read that right after Gideon dies. Same old story.

Right? Same thing. And we have this after the death of every judge so far. It's just like clockwork. It's the formula. We have the death of judge and Israel goes back to idolatry.

And then God judges them. And then Israel cries out or, in a sense, repents. And God raises up a judge, a deliverer. And that's been the formula that we've come to expect all through our study thus far of the book of Judges.

But here in chapter 9, we have something slightly different. It's slightly different. But actually, it's not all that different, if you think about it.

This time, after Gideon's death, the death of the judge, this time, God's judgment comes from within. Rather than from without.

[12:42] You see, Abimelech is God's judgment for Israel's idolatry. And so, instead of sending an invading army from outside, God sends the problem from inside through Abimelech.

And boy, did he mess things up in Israel. Really did. And you might just need to consider some of what we can learn about this from Abimelech in chapter 9.

And we're not going to read the entire chapter. But let me just make some points. Kind of take a survey of chapter 9 and what Abimelech did.

Now, Abimelech was, of course, the son of Gideon. You remember that. And I've already mentioned that. And actually, he was the offspring of an unlawful union. An unlawful union between Gideon and this concubine in Shechem.

Gideon had a lot of wives. He had a lot of concubines. That explains why he had 70 sons. And the Bible doesn't even mention the daughters. Had to have been some of those there. And so, it's not a lawful union based upon what God had commanded of Israel when they entered into the land.

[14:01] There was to be no unions between Israel and the Canaanites. And so, this was unlawful before God. And so, Abimelech is half Israelite and half Canaanite.

His name means, my father is king. That's what the name Abimelech means. My father is king. And so, clearly, he tried to live up to his name in the sense that he would then become king over all Israel.

Remember, in a sense, Gideon had said he didn't want that position but really did want that position. And, you know, you remember that from our study of Gideon. And so, here's Abimelech. He wanted to live up to the name. But that, too, is illegitimate. It's unlawful. An unlawful endeavor. God did not mean for Israel to have a king.

Why? He was their king. He was to be their king. Now, eventually, God would allow them to have a king. And you remember how that went when Saul became king.

[15:06] And so, Abimelech tries to accomplish this desire to be king. He tries to accomplish it through kind of diplomacy.

Diplomacy, in a sense, with the people of his wife, his concubine. Or, excuse me, his mother. The concubine of Gideon.

He tries to do this through diplomacy. And so, he convinces his mother's people, the Shechemites, to support him in this quest. To become king in Israel.

And after consideration, they support him. Because he's kind of one of their own. All right? We'll back you on this. And then, chapter 9 tells us, and I think I read this portion of it, that they gave Abimelech 70 pieces of silver from their pagan temple.

So, this silver belonged to their false god, in a sense. I guess you could say that Abimelech is going to try to be king of Israel through the campaign donations of Satan.

[16:13] There's been a lot of politicians who have become, you know, leaders through that kind of campaign donation. All right. So, then he takes this money. And with this money, he, in a sense, hires some hoodlums to work for him.

To kind of bring this thing about with a strong arm. We see that in chapter 9 as well. And then, Abimelech has these hoodlums, these thugs, has them kill his brothers.

And his desire is to kill all 70 of them. And he pretty near accomplishes that. He kills all 70 of them except for one, Jotham, who was able to escape.

And then Abimelech rules for three short years after which the men of Shechem then decide, we don't want him anymore.

And so, they make war against Abimelech and his supporters. And so, suddenly, there is all out, really, in a sense, civil war within Israel.

[17 : 20] And then, in the heat of the battle, Abimelech standing a little bit too close to the city wall. And there's a lady up on top, a woman on top.

And she just kind of hoists over a small millstone. Some translations have a slice of a millstone. Maybe it's just a part of one. Or it is just a small one.

Hoists that over. And she hits her mark. And hits Abimelech on the head. The Bible says crushes his head. But apparently, it was not enough to kill him right away. And so, what does he do?

He does the brave thing. He has his armor bearer take out the sword and kill him all the way.

Because he just couldn't have it said that in the heat of the battle, a woman killed him.

You know. Alright. So, you know, that's kind of a quick overview of chapter 9. And it helps us understand the state of Israel at this time because of Abimelech.

[18 : 20] Well, actually because of their sin. And God's judgment of their sin. And he even used Jotham to prophesy what was ultimately going to happen.

And you can read that there in chapter 9. Alright. So, here's the condition. This mess. The nation Israel is in turmoil.

They are at war within themselves. There is, in a sense, civil war going on. And not only that, but the nation Israel has turned almost totally their backs toward God.

And they are now giving their worship and their service to a pagan god. Pagan god Baal. And this is how the chapter ends there in chapter 9.

Let me read it again. It just ends verse 56 of chapter 9. And thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech which he had done to his father by killing his 70 brothers.

[19 : 24] And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads. And on them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubal, or Gideon.

Alright. So, there's where we're left. And so, it's the mess that the next two judges inherited. Second, the ministry they initiated.

And it takes, it's going to take quite a bit of speculation here. And yet, I think it's pretty clear. We can see the results pretty clearly, I think, even though a lot of it is implied.

The ministry they initiated, these two judges. And we can, again, only surmise how successful they were in their ministries. There's nothing said about an invading enemy.

Remember, I said the enemy was from within. And though Abimelech is dead, there's still a lot to take care of. I mean, there's all-out civil war in the nation.

[20 : 30] And so, the enemy was within. It's war and turmoil and idolatry. And there's nothing, of course, said here about any great military victories. They did not command any great armies.

They did not lead in any great military campaigns. None of that is said about these two judges. So, what did they do? What did they do?

Well, they maintained peace and unity in Israel for 45 years. That's what they did. And, in addition to that, and more importantly, they brought spiritual healing and revival to Israel for 45 years.

How do we know that? Well, it's implied in the wording of verse 6. I read verse 6 a moment ago.

Then, and this is after these two judges are dead. Then the children of Israel again.

Now, that's the word that clues you in. Again did evil in the sight of the Lord and serve the Baals.

The implication being that during the judge or leadership of these two judges, Israel had returned to the Lord.

[21 : 39] They departed from the Lord after Gideon died, and God sent judgment. He sent civil war and Abimelech. And then we have these two judges coming on the scene.

God raises them up, and for 45 years, we must assume that they were able, used by God, to bring Israel back to God. Because then, after they die, again Israel does evil in the sight of God.

So, I think it's clear then that the ministry they initiated was to bring peace, to bring unity among the people of God, and to bring spiritual healing and revival, spiritual revival.

And that lasted for 45 years. Now, there may be a lesson here for us, though we're not called to be, you know, to be deliverers of American culture.

Not called in the sense of a person called actually to that place of leadership and to be acknowledged within our nation as that kind of leader.

[22 : 57] I think God has raised up some leaders like that. You know, some great preachers and evangelists who have preached the word and have been very influential over the history of our nation.

Very influential in leading our nation in the way of biblical principles and so forth. And we could probably name some of those here tonight. Not only those early on in the history of our nation, but even those who are contemporary in our day that are very influential for righteousness.

And God raises up men and women for that very purpose. And in a sense, every one of us have been called to be this kind of influence for peace and unity and spiritual revival and walking according to the word of God.

Jesus said that we are to be the salt of the world, salt of the earth. We're to be salt, salt and light, but we're salt. And I'm sure you have over the years heard someone explain what that possibly could mean, all the various implications of that, that we are salt of the earth.

And I'll just maybe list a few here. And these are not mine. I borrowed these, but you might want to jot these down. When it says that we're the salt of the earth, to be the salt of the earth, it speaks of our, first of all, our preserving influence in our culture, in our nation, our preserving influence.

[24 : 37] And everybody knows that salt is a preservative, of course. salt wards off rot and decay. And, you know, it's kind of rubbed into meat in order to preserve it.

In fact, to this day, I remember my Uncle Sam. I'm not talking about the government. I'm talking about my uncle who really was named Sam. We called him Uncle Sam. And he owned and operated a grocery store for, gracious, 60 years, I think.

And I've spent a lot of time there when I would visit my grandparents. I just loved that old grocery store. It was built, you know, actually was converted from an old saloon.

It's a really old town up in central Missouri. And so, you know, it was just kind of one of the, it had a big potbelly stove in the middle of the grocery store that at one time they used to warm the place with coal, had the coal chute and place for the coal in the back and so forth.

But in the back room, he had hanging from the ceiling hams that had salt, they had been preserved with salt.

[25 : 46] You know, not refrigerated. And some of those hams had been hanging there for 50 years, he told me. Now, I don't know what kind of condition they were in. He said, some of them probably you could still eat.

Still be fine because the salt preserved it. And rather interesting. And we know that's the property of salt. And we're the salt of the earth.

And so, how do we relate that to our role and purpose in our society? Well, you know, it is the righteousness of God's people that made America great in the first place.

I really believe that. And it is still that righteousness that will preserve our country today. It keeps our country from, I think, from judgment today.

Though I think we're seeing that dwindling away. Also, not only our preserving influence, but as salt of the earth, it speaks of our penetrating influence.

[26 : 49] Penetrating. Salt will penetrate and infiltrate whatever it touches. It penetrates. And so, we have been called by the Lord to be an active force in the world around us.

An active force for good, for righteousness. Penetrating the strongholds of sin and Satan. And that has been the case all throughout our history. And still is true.

Our penetrating influence. Third, our purifying influence. Purifying influence. Salt is a remarkable cleansing agent.

Salt is. Christians, then, have a purifying effect on the world around us. Fourth, our pleasing influence.

Now, if I have any issue to take with the author of these, I think it would be this one. But when I think about it, it is true. Salt adds flavor to food.

[27 : 54] Now, we do know that. I love salt on my food. You know, and I probably put too much on there. That's why I take high blood pressure medicine. Maybe.

See, I just take care of that. Don't you? Well, some of you are a whole lot more health conscious than I am. But we all know that salt does add flavor to food.

And some of us wish we could put salt on our food. Some of us have had to give that up. And so there are other substitutes but they just don't quite measure up to salt, in my opinion. And I could be wrong but I don't think so.

But we know that about salt. It's a pleasing thing to have salt added to your food. Well, Christians should flavor the world around us as salt.

We are to so live our lives that we bring out the best in those around us. and you've experienced that haven't you?

[28 : 54] In the way you live how it affects those people around you. Now I'm not just talking about your family but even other acquaintances. By the way you live it has a tendency to encourage others to live better.

You know, I don't know how many times I've had you know, had someone you know, suddenly clean up their language because I was there. Now, you know, they need to go a lot further than that but you see the influence and that's just simply an example.

Number five and this is interesting our poisoning influence. Are we to have that kind of influence?

Well, in a sense we are. You know that salt kills some things.

I mean it does. Have you ever poured salt on a slug? Oh, come on, be honest, you've done it haven't you? Yes, you have.

Not today. No, I know some of you haven't because you know, you're just too kind. And you know, and this is kind of a guy brain, boy brain.

[30 : 05] You know, we got to try those kind of things. Pour the salt on the slug and see what happens. We know it kills the slug, all right. The salt poured on a lawn will kill the grass too.

I mean, we all know that, don't we? As a matter of fact, back in chapter 9 with Abimelech, Abimelech took a city, took a city, conquered a city and he sowed the city, the Bible says, with salt in order to prevent the ground from being able to produce crops.

And this was apparently a very common thing that conquerors would do after they conquer a city. also too much salt, and I've already kind of alluded to this, too much salt is not good on your blood pressure.

Now, how in the world could this ever relate to a believer? Well, listen, biblical Christianity is pure poison to sin. It is.

And to a sinful culture. And I think we've forgotten that. And part of our problem is we've kind of backed away from that kind of overt active influence in our culture.

[31 : 16] Of course, Christians have been guilty of that for years upon years. You know, well, that's, you know, them and we are who we are and this is the church and that's and the two don't come together.

But we have a responsibility to be this kind of poisoning influence, poisoning that is the direction of sin and the propagation of sin. And then the final one would be our promoting influence, our promoting salt creates a thirst for water.

Right? It does. Just eat a bag of potato chips and see what happens. Of course, you would never do that. That's bad for your heart. You eat a bag of potato chips.

But just eat some potato chips and you're going to be thirsty. Salt produces a thirst. It really does. And so as salt, the Christian has really the privilege, the wonderful opportunity to promote a thirst for God, a thirst for the Lord and for his word in this world.

And we can do that. God does that through us. And so we're the salt. We're to be the salt of the earth. All right.

[32 : 31] So the mess they inherited, the ministry they initiated, better quit here. Third, the message they indicated.

That's kind of interesting too. We don't have anything in the text about what they preached or what they proclaimed, how they led in that way.

We don't have anything in there. but their names indicated their message. The name Tola, Tola means crimson worm.

That sounds really encouraging. I mean, you can make a good message out of that. Crimson worm. Well, this is a reference to the caucus worm that is found in oak trees.

And this worm produced a red dye. And according to Scripture, the place in Scripture, it was the dye of the caucus worm that Israel used to color various articles in the tabernacle.

[33 : 42] Kind of interesting. Tabernacle, very much a symbolic of the body of Christ and his work and ministry.

And the name, though the name, his name comes from the Hebrew root word Tola or Tala, actually. Tala, which means to be clothed in scarlet.

All right, now you can just take this however you want and say, well, you know, this might be a stretch. But listen, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was literally clothed in scarlet when he accomplished redemption at his cross.

also Tola was the son of Puah, which means light. It means light. And so Tola was what?

The son of light. The son of light. And this is yet another picture of Messiah. The light of the world.

[34 : 57] John chapter 8, verse 12. All right, then the second judge, second of the two judges, his name was Yair, or Jair, means the enlightener.

The enlightener. And in Malachi chapter 4, verse 2, the Messiah is called the son of righteousness. Not S-O-N, but S-U-N.

The son of righteousness. Same as saying the enlightener of righteousness. Also, Jair, or Yair, and his sons, and this is an interesting part of the story, and you wonder, well, what's up with this part of the story?

His sons rode donkeys. They rode donkeys. You don't find that interesting? That they rode donkeys?

Well, some people ride donkeys, but why would it be included here? Well, the donkey was a symbol of peace. The horse symbol of, would you guess?

[36 : 07] Yeah, war. The donkey is a symbol of peace. The Messiah is the prince of peace. Prince of peace. And Jesus entered Jerusalem, remember, on his way to the cross, riding on a donkey.

And so, the indication of the message, the message was through their very name. Light, peace, scarlet, all of these things, and their ministry, the result and the outcome of their ministry bears all of that out.

The message they indicated. All right? Well, amen. There you have a couple of minor judges. And then, we'll move on from there next time.

Amen.