

Tola and Jair.

Judges 10:1-5.

Sunday afternoon, June 19, 2011.

I. Introduction.

- A. It is unlikely that either Tola or Jair are found in the top ten favorite Bible characters of any of us.
- B. The reason for that is that exceedingly little is said about them; both men fall in the category of a man like Shamgar (Judges 3:31), who also had just one verse dedicated to him, and one mere mention of his name later on.
- C. We should not conclude from this that they were unimportant characters; it is just that not much of their ministry was recorded, although both men served a good number of years; twenty two and twenty three years each respectively. A parallel would be the minor prophets of Hosea through Malachi; these too are not to be regarded as less important than the major prophets of Isaiah through Daniel; it is just that their writings are not nearly as extensive as those of the major prophets.

II. Tola. Vs. 1,2.

- A. What do we know about this man, Tola? Not much.
 - 1. His family: The son of Puah, the son of dodo.
We know nothing about either man, but the fact that their names are given might indicate that they were men who were somewhat widely known, and therefore men of some importance.
 - 2. His tribe: Issachar.
 - 3. His place of residence: Shamir, in the mountains of Ephraim. We know nothing more about Shamir; archeologists have never pinpointed its location.
 - 4. His death and burial: Also in Shamir.
 - 5. Time span of his ministry: Twenty three years.
- B. What do we know about the ministry of Tola? Just two things are stated.
 - 1. That he came after the Abimelech fiasco.
 - a. Abimelech had worked his worst; he had killed all but one of the seventy sons of Gideon; he had violently seized the leadership role once Gideon passed away; he had sown death and destruction in the towns of Shechem and Thebez, and he finally met his match when a woman dropped a mill stone on his head.
 - b. After the death of Abimelech we read that Israel departed, every man to his home, in Judges 9:55. No doubt a considerable turmoil remained however; now who was going to lead Israel? Another enterprising hot head like Abimelech? Power vacuums like the one left by Abimelech don't wait around for long before someone fills it, and if it is not a good man, some criminal element will do so before long.
 - c. It is in this setting that the Lord does provide a good man for Israel in the person of Tola. We may assert that he was a good man for two reasons:
 - It is said of him that he arose to save Israel.
 - It is said of the combined rule of Tola and Jair that after their reign Israel once again lapsed into idolatry; from this we deduce that Israel was

faithful to the Lord during their ministry.

2. He saved Israel.

What did he save Israel from? Here are some things that have been suggested:

- a. From the state of anarchy that the death of Abimelech left behind.
- b. From the turmoil and the aftermath caused by the Abimelech fiasco. The fact that he came right on the heels of Abimelech lends itself to this view.
- c. From some other unnamed external enemy.

The word translated “saved” is everywhere else in the book of Judges used to denote salvation from one or another external enemy.

Application:

No matter how we look at this saving work, we see something here of the loving kindness of the Lord. The Abimelechs of this world do not have the final word. The chaos caused by an Abimelech of this world does not have the final word. After Abimelech God raises up a Tola, and He brings salvation, a future and a hope.

After walking through the valley of the shadow of death we find a table prepared before us; we find that He anoints our head with oil and that our cup runs over. Psalm 23:4,5.

III. Jair.

- A. The scene is Gilead; a region on the East side of the Jordan River, South and East of the Sea of Galilee.
- B. He judged Israel 22 years, and died in the town of Camon, in the region of Gilead.
- C. Something of the character of his reign is given us in the words: “He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, they also had thirty towns, which are called Havoth Jair (towns of Jair) to this day.”
- D. Without taking away anything from the good which characterized Jair’s reign, we see something here about the nature of human rulers. How seldom do they want to be cast in the character of a servant. There always seems to be a craving after displaying their greatness, their status, and the circle of their influence.
 1. We see it with Gideon. No sooner does Israel ask him and his posterity to rule over them, or we see Gideon making an ephod for himself and setting it up in Ophrah, thus by-passing the ministry of the Tabernacle. He takes many wives for himself and fathers 70 sons (and who knows how many daughters). In those days the size of your posterity displayed your status and position in life, and Gideon was anxious to display both as sizeable. In Gideon’s case multiplying wives and offspring made the Abimelech fiasco possible.
 2. A similar tendency can be observed in Jair: Thirty sons (and how many daughters from how many wives?) on thirty donkeys, thirty cities named after him (Havoth Jair) Here is personal greatness and glory on display.
 3. In Deuteronomy 17:17 the Lord had said that the ruler of His people was not to multiply wives. Obedience to this directive would have limited the display of personal glory. Few, if any, in Israel’s history obeyed this directive.
 4. Only in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ do we see true lowliness of heart; an unpretentiousness, and a true servant spirit. May we ever hold that model before us and beware of the tendency of our hearts to the contrary.