

## REST AND DECLINE

--JUDGES 10:1-16--

### INTRODUCTION:

My message ended last week with the death, the violent death of Abimelech. When his forces saw that he had fallen and was dead we are told they scattered, each returning to his own home to try and pick up the remaining pieces of their shattered lives. The nation was wounded and hurting after Abimelech's rule and rampage. Israel needed to heal from this dark stain on their history and to do that they needed rest. One commentator called this an interlude, or a welcome break in an activity that is demanding in some way. We have just read a sad, sobering, and emotional history and now the author gives us a bit of a break between the history of Abimelech and the history of Jephthah. A short interlude of five verses that span 45 years and then before launching into the history of Jephthah we are given Israel's greatest act of treachery and unfaithfulness to the LORD, completely forgetting His grace and compassion in delivering them over and over; and showing absolutely no gratitude for the 45 years of rest to allow them to heal and to prosper in the land He had given to them.

#### I. TOLA – THE HEALER (Judges 10:1-2)

- a. The first four words of chapter 10 bring Abimelech's chaotic and violent career and death into sharp \_\_\_\_\_ as the setting to Tola's contribution to the lives of the sons of Israel in the days of the judges.
- b. The author writes, "*Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to \_\_\_\_\_ Israel...*" (Judges 10:1a, NASB95)
- c. We are not told a whole lot about \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. The only other thing that we are told concerning Tola was that he judged Israel for \_\_\_\_ years.

#### II. JAIR – THE PROSPEROUS (Judges 10:3-5)

- a. We are told that after the death of Tola, \_\_\_\_\_ arose and judged Israel for 22 years.

- b. We are not told much about Jair; we receive no \_\_\_\_\_ just that he is a Gileadite because he lives in Gilead.
- c. There is nothing wrong with peace and prosperity, it is a blessing to be enjoyed with \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

#### III. ISRAEL – APOSTATES AGAIN (Judges 10:6-16)

- a. After the death of Tola and Jair we read those words that have become too familiar in this book, "*Then the sons of Israel again did \_\_\_\_\_ in the sight of the LORD...*" (Judges 10:6a, NASB95)
- b. The LORD's \_\_\_\_\_ again burns against His people for their evil in forsaking Him for what was false, what was wicked, what was dead.
- c. At last, the oppression has become so \_\_\_\_\_ that Israel cries out to the LORD to save them, to give them relief from their oppressors.
- d. Surely God will \_\_\_\_\_ them again, then God speaks to them, and it is not the response they wanted to hear.
- e. As you can imagine this was not the \_\_\_\_\_ the Israelites expected, and they panicked.

### CONCLUSION:

From this passage we first learn that at times God provides us with times of rest. It is at times when God intervenes in our lives to deliver us in some way, He lifts our burdens and gives us rest. These periods of rest are pure gifts from God. The rest or the interlude that we looked at in the first 5 verses of today's passage illustrate for us the opportunities and challenges that such rests can provide. Tola and Jair provide us with two examples of what should or should not be done during these rests provided by God.

First, these rests provide the time needed for healing. Tola provided this by his wise administration by bringing a stability that was not available under Abimelech's reign.

Second, a rest such as the one looked at this morning gives opportunity to plan for the future. This did not happen under the rule of Jair, instead they relaxed and enjoyed the peace and prosperity that

had returned to them, they were lulled into a false sense of security and began to assume that the good times will last forever and therefore no preparation is needed. When this happens, people become self-focused and forgetful of God. They live in the present with no thought of the past or the future. When the next crisis comes and finds them and those that lead them tragically unprepared. And we saw that at the end of Jair's life the LORD was already forgotten, and the people again turned to the worship and service of the gods around them, and no longer remembered the LORD or served Him which resulted in the end of their rest as God handed them over to the Ammonites and the Philistines to afflict and crush them so that they were greatly distressed. It was only because of their great misery which reached a point that the LORD could bear it no longer, and we are about to see the amazing grace of God again, the sinners only hope. This is the same grace that God poured out on us while we were still in rebellion against Him. While we were yet in our sin, God crushed His own Son on our behalf that we might have our sins forgiven and escape God's wrath from coming upon the wicked. Praise God for His grace and beware of forgetting Him when He gives us seasons of rest.