

Tracing the Ways of the Lord in History

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening, friends. We turn to our Bible reading now in the book of Judges. We're at chapter 10, verse 1, and you'll find this in our big hardback Bibles on page 210.

If that's the Bible, you have 210. And I'm reading Judges chapter 10 and the first 11 verses of chapter 11 tonight.

Last week we were studying chapter 9 with its story of the terrible Abimelech. And you'll see that chapter 10 begins with the words after Abimelech.

So here we go, chapter 10, verse 1. After Abimelech, there arose to save Israel Tola, the son of Puah, son of Dodo, a man of Issachar.

And he lived at Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. And he judged Israel 23 years. Then he died and was buried at Shamir. After him arose Jair, the Gileadite, who judged Israel 22 years.

[1 : 12] And he had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys. And they had 30 cities, called Havoth-Jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died and was buried in Caman.

The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines.

And they forsook the Lord and did not serve him. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites.

And they crushed and oppressed the people of Israel that year. For 18 years they oppressed all the people of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Ammonites, which is in Gilead.

And the Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

[2 : 19] And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, We have sinned against you because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals. And the Lord said to the people of Israel, Did I not save you from the Egyptians and from the Ammonites, from the Ammonites and from the Philistines, the Sidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Moanites oppressed you, and you cried out to me, and I saved you out of their hand?

Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods. Therefore I will save you no more. Go and cry out to the gods whom you have chosen. Let them save you in the time of your distress.

And the people of Israel said to the Lord, We have sinned. Do to us whatever seems good to you. Only please deliver us this day. So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord.

And he became impatient over the misery of Israel. Or perhaps better, he could bear the misery of Israel no longer. Then the Ammonites were called to arms, and they encamped in Gilead.

And the people of Israel came together, and they encamped at Mizpah. And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, Who is the man who will begin to fight against the Ammonites?

[3 : 37] He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute.

Gilead was the father of Jephthah. And Gilead's wife also bore him sons. And when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman.

Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. And worthless fellows collected around Jephthah and went out with him. After a time, the Ammonites made war against Israel.

And when the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob. They said to Jephthah, Come and be our leader, that we may fight with the Ammonites.

But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, Did you not hate me and drive me out of my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?

[4 : 42] And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, That is why we have turned to you now, that you may go with us and fight with the Ammonites and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, If you bring me home again to fight with the Ammonites and the Lord gives them over to me, I will be your head.

And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, The Lord will be witness between us if we do not do as you say. So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead and the people made him head and leader over them.

And Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord at Mizpah. Amen. This is the word of the Lord. And may it be a blessing to us.

Well, friends, do turn with me again, please, to Judges chapter 10 on page 210.

And the passage that we're studying tonight is the passage I read, chapter 10, verse 1, to chapter 11, verse 11. I don't know whether you've come across the name of Lady Antonia Fraser.

[6 : 18] Antonia Fraser is a writer of historical biographies. She's researched and written up the lives of Mary, Queen of Scots, of Oliver Cromwell, and I think one or two other significant and famous people.

And I remember hearing Antonia Fraser being interviewed on the radio a few years ago, and she was being asked questions about her interest in history and how it had developed. And she said something like this.

I began to develop my interest in history at the age of about 12. I became fascinated with figures from the past. It was as though a door was opened before me, and I entered a wonderful spacious cavern, which was filled with beautiful gems and jewels.

And I realized that I could spend my whole life exploring this great cavern and looking carefully at all the wonders that it contained. Now, don't you think that's a rather lovely account of the beginnings of an interest in history?

I wonder if you like history, reading history books, perhaps historical novels, looking at historical dramas on the television, or maybe historical documentaries.

[7 : 29] Blackadder doesn't count, I think. Some people, of course, are more interested in history than other people, but there is a sense in which any serious Christian, any serious student of the Bible, has to develop an interest in history in order to understand the gospel and the Christian faith.

Now, the book of Judges that we're reading is all history, but then most of the Bible is history as well, and even the parts of it that seem least historical, like the books of the Psalms and the Proverbs.

They can only be well understood within their historical context. You need to know something about King David to understand the Psalms, because he wrote most of them. You need to understand something about King Solomon to understand the Proverbs.

But the key point is this. It is the history, this great narrative recorded in the Bible, which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions.

Broadly speaking, the sacred books of other faiths will teach a way of life, how to live, if you like, how to pray, how to relate to your neighbor, how to cope with suffering, rules for fasting and for pilgrimages and almsgiving and so on.

[8 : 46] In other words, do this, live like this, and your life may be acceptable and good. Historical events in the other faiths are really of minor significance.

What is important is the program of how to live. Now, the Bible is quite different, because the primary aim of the Bible is to record what God has done as a matter of historical fact.

The very first verse of the Bible sets this historical tone. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Historical achievement. And so it goes on and on, recording the great deeds of the Lord, how he made Adam and Eve, and when they'd rebelled against him, he expelled them from the Garden of Eden.

He sent the flood later on. Later on yet, he called Abraham to be the father of his special chosen nation. And so the historical account goes on and on until it reaches its glorious climax in recording the history of Jesus Christ and his achievements, his life, his teaching, and especially his purposeful death and resurrection, his ascension, his outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church.

The Bible is about what God has done. And that is why it's good news. God has acted. Here is the news. He's acted supremely in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus so as to secure our eternal benefit and joy.

[10:16] Now the other faiths can only offer good advice, not good news, but good advice about what people should do, how they should behave. Whereas the Bible teaches the good news about what God has actually done in his great mercy.

Other faiths say, do. Christianity says, done. Now this is the big reason why the Christian can be so confident and assured.

Our salvation depends not upon our frail efforts to try and live in a certain way, but on the sure foundation of what God has achieved fully and finally and decisively in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Now it's very good for us to bear all this in mind when we get into the hinterland of a historical book like Judges. The historical accounts that we have here of people like Deborah and Gideon and Jephthah and Samson teach us two things, two main things.

So these historical books, they teach us two main things. First of all, they teach us about God and the way that he relates to his people, how God looks after and shepherds his people, how he disciplines them where necessary, how he rescues them and provides for them.

[11:32] So they teach us about God. But secondly, these historical records teach us about Jesus and his achievements because these Old Testament figures display some of the features of Jesus.

Not all the features of Jesus, but some of them. And these are very flawed people. People like Samson and Jephthah, particularly Samson, are very flawed. And yet, like Jesus, 1,200 years later, they rescue God's people from a level of oppression that they cannot endure.

So they are saviors with a small s. And their lives and achievements begin to build up in our minds a picture of the true and final saviour with a capital S whom we shan't meet until we read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

But it's in the history, it's in the facts of what God has done that the good news lies. So you might say, no history, no gospel. Now, our subject for tonight is tracing the ways of the Lord through history.

Tonight's passage is a bit of a mixed grill. We have the brief accounts. Just look with me at the first few verses. We have the brief accounts of Tola and Jair in chapter 10, verses 1 to 5.

[12:48] We then have a section from verse 6 to 16 where the author steps back from the page-turning story to give us an analytical summary of where the people of Israel are up to and why.

And it's not flattering to the people of Israel. And then at chapter 10, verse 17, the aggressive Ammonites charge into battle against Israel and the Lord then raises up Jephthah, a mighty warrior who puts down the Ammonite threat and proves to be an interesting and complex character.

And as we shall see next week, he has at least a first degree in history if not a PhD. But that's for next week. So here we go, tracing the ways of the Lord through history.

And we'll look at our passage under three sections. The first will be quite brief, verses 1 to 5, which we'll call a welcome respite. Now this is the account of Tola and Jair.

The book of Judges records the life and the work of 12 judges. Six of them are generally called the major judges. And they are Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, or if you like, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

[14:00] And then we have the six minor judges whose names are almost entirely unknown. They are Shamgar, Tola, and Jair, followed by Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, whose stories are written up at the end of chapter 12.

Now we mustn't dismiss these minor judges as being unimportant. Why not? Well, simply because they're important enough for the Lord to include them in the pages of Scripture, which is more than can be said for you and me.

Just look at verse 2. Tola judged Israel for 23 years. Abimelech wrecked things in just three years. Tola judged Israel 23 years.

Then verse 3, after him arose Jair, who judged Israel for 22 years. That is a total of 45 years of peace and calm without the wretched Midianites, Philistines, or Ammonites strapping on their swords to have a go at Israel.

45 years is a long period for a country to be at peace with its neighbors. So the contribution of these two minor figures of Bible history was considerable.

[15:03] The first phrase of verse 1 is remarkable in itself. After Abimelech, Abimelech, the butcher, the destroyer of Israel, there came Tola to save Israel.

So the destroyer makes way for the saviour. Why? Because God's historical purpose to save and to bless his chosen people did not come to an end with the mayhem caused by Abimelech.

God was patiently working out his purposes, rescuing and shepherding his people through these little known saviours who are to some degree patterns of the great saviour who was still to come.

The very words used here suggest the role of Jesus. Verse 1, Tola saved, Israel. Verse 2, Tola judged Israel.

Jesus is the saviour and the judge. So these little known leaders are already exhibiting the features of the great one who was to follow them 1200 years later.

[16:04] So let's honour Bible figures like Tola and Jair because the Lord honours them by including them in the Bible. If we want to call them minor judges, let's think of them as highly as we might think of the so called minor prophets.

The minor prophets, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Obadiah and so on, they're not minor in what they say. Their messages are as weighty and authoritative and hair raising as the messages of the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

It's just that they're much shorter in length. Minor in length if you like, but not minor in power or significance. And in the same way, these lesser known judges are significant leaders.

Tola rescued and settled Israel after the bloodbath of Abimelech's reign. And the account of Jair in verse 4 shows that he developed an effective administrative system.

He delegated authority, it seems, to his 30 sons who traveled around the country on their 30 donkeys on a regular circuit, settling disputes and administering the law.

[17:09] more. 45 years of peace and respite. The book of Judges as a whole describes a period of deepening darkness and spiritual decline before the advent of Samuel and the first kings of Israel.

But it's not all decline in Judges. And these first five verses in chapter 10 show us God's continuing care for his beloved people. So there's the first thing, a welcome respite.

Now second, let's look at verses 6 to 16. This section shows us the very much undeserved mercy of God.

Now you'll see verses 6 to 16 follow a pattern which is becoming familiar to those who have read the book of Judges up to this point. In fact, verses 6 to 8 almost exactly repeat verses that we have had five times already in the earlier chapters of Judges.

And the pattern is this. The people do evil in the Lord's sight, which means they turn to other gods and worship them. The Lord is angry with them. He gives them into the power of a neighboring nation who oppress them cruelly.

[18:19] But the whole sorry business is much worse at this later point in the book. Just look at verse 6 there. They don't simply serve the Baals and the Ashtaroth as if that wasn't bad enough.

The Baals and the Ashtaroth were the male and female fertility gods of the Canaanites living to the west of the Jordan. It's not sufficient for them only to worship them. They send emails now to the gods of all the other surrounding nations and they invite them to the party as well.

Look at this list. The gods of Syria up to the northeast, the gods of Sidon to the northwest, the gods of Moab down to the south, the gods of the Ammonites to the southeast, and the gods of the Philistines to the southwest.

rest. Just imagine two posh, late middle-aged Israelite ladies talking to each other. Well, you see, Leonora, says one lady to the other, at the temple.

Frankly, the old austere days of the law of Moses, they're just old hats, aren't they? I mean, those days are gone, gone forever, and I'm glad they are. We're now entering a brave new world of choice and color and vivid experience.

[19:30] I mean, why serve only one God when we can serve half a dozen and we get the benefit of everything that all of them have to offer? It is a little bit shocking, I know, if you've been brought up as we have, but you just have to calm your conscience down and refashion it a little bit.

As far as I'm concerned, it's the five S's for me. Son, seed, savagery, sex, and sacrifice. Especially child sacrifice. Very naughty.

But I'm told it's very effective. Now, I don't know if that kind of talk exactly went on in those terms, but we can be certain from verse six that rampant multi-faith practices were escalating in Israel. Look at the way our author piles up those names, almost with a sense of despair in his heart. The gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines.

And they forsook the Lord, their true faithful God, their only God. No wonder, as verse seven puts it, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

[20 : 36] And then what happens? He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. Now, what does this word selling mean?

Well, when you sell something to a new owner, let's say you sell a car, the new owner can then do whatever he pleases with it. So when the Lord sold the Israelites into the hand of the Philistines and the Ammonites, he was allowing these hostile nations to do as they pleased to the Israelites. He was withdrawing his protection from the Israelites. He was giving them over to the consequences of their folly and wickedness. Now, the Lord did not, as it were, sell the Israelites forever.

Selling them here in verse seven doesn't mean that he tore up his covenant with them and cast them off permanently. No, at the deepest level, they remained his. If he had cast them off permanently, he would never have raised up Jephthah and Samson to rescue them.

But it meant that as a punishment, as a chastisement, he withdrew his protection from them for a number of years. In fact, for 18 years, in this case, as verse eight tells us, so as to bring home to their stubborn hearts how foolish it is to serve gods that are no gods.

[21 : 55] Now, you'll see from verse seven that the Lord sold the Israelites into the hand of the Philistines and the Ammonites. Now, the Philistines don't really begin to lift their head in anger until we get to chapter 13 and the story of Samson.

But you'll see here in verse eight that the Ammonites begin to oppress the Israelites to the east of the Jordan. Think of that map again. Sea of Galilee up here. Watch my left hand.

Here's the river Jordan running down southwards for 60 miles into the Dead Sea to the east of the Jordan, Transjordan or Gilead. That was where two and a half tribes of the Israelites lived and the Ammonites were beyond them, a little bit further east into what is now called Jordan.

Well, Amman is the capital of Jordan and the Amman comes from the Ammonites. So that's where they lived. So they begin to oppress the Transjordan Gilead Israelites. And then in verse nine, you'll see they become even bolder and they cross over to the west side of Jordan to bring trouble to the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim.

Now the conversation between the Israelites and the Lord in verses 10 to 15 tells us a lot about the Israelites and a lot about the Lord.

[23 : 10] When they are in real trouble as they are now, it's the Lord that they turn to, not the gods of the Gentile nations. Look at them there at the end of verse nine, severely distressed.

And what do they do? Verse 10, they cry out to the Lord. Now this is what is sometimes described as bomb shelter theology. What's your theology when you're crouched in the bomb shelter and you can hear bombs whistling and exploding all around you?

Well, you cry out to the Lord, don't you? Whether you're a Christian or not. You're not interested at that point in honoring him. All you're interested in is to get yourself out of the bomb shelter with your skin in one piece.

Help me God if there is a God. Save me God if there is a God. That's how the people end their prayer to the Lord here in verse 15. They say to him only, whatever else you do or don't do, please deliver us this day.

Get us out of this terrible mess. Now there are signs here of something that looks a bit like repentance. Look at verse 10. We have sinned against you.

[24 : 14] And again in verse 15. We have sinned. And then in verse 16, their words seem to be backed up by their deeds. They put away the foreign gods from among them and serve the Lord.

And those phrases are a real contrast to the way they've behaved back in the earlier chapters of Judges where the author only says that in their times of oppression, they cried out to the Lord for help and then he sent them a savior.

But there was no mention back then of we've sinned because we've forsaken our God. And there was certainly no mention of putting away their foreign gods and serving the Lord as we have here in

verse 16.

Now I'm afraid we have to see that this was a superficial repentance. The Lord sends Jephthah who rescues them from the Ammonites. And then he does send Ibzan, Elon and Abdon at the end of chapter 12.

But look at chapter 13, verse 1. And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years.

[25 : 22] It's clear that there hasn't been a deep and lasting repentance. If you put this in terms of addiction, they've been clean for a short while but they've turned back to their old bondage again.

And going back to chapter 10, this explains why the Lord says what he says in verse 11. It sounds harsh but he understands their deep and real fickleness.

So he says to them in verse 11 there, did I not save you from the Egyptians and from the Ammonites, from the Ammonites and the Philistines? Answer, of course I did. The Sidonians also and the Amalekites and the Mionites oppressed you and you cried out to me and I saved you out of their hand.

Yet, despite this goodness and mercy, yet despite this, you have forsaken me and served other gods. Therefore, he says, I will save you no more.

Go and cry out to the gods whom you've chosen. Let them save you in the time of your distress. In other words, you've made your own bed. Now you must lie on it. I will save you no more.

[26 : 25] Go to your fancy godlets and find out what they're really made of. And yet, although the Lord says there in verse 13, I will save you no more, he does save them again through Jephthah and later through Samson.

So how do we understand this? Is the Lord fickle saying something in verse 13, I will save you no more, that he doesn't quite mean? Do we have a fickle God as well as a fickle Israel?

Now you know, don't you, that the answer to that question is going to be no. You know that the Bible so often tells us that the Lord is trustworthy, loyal, faithful, unchanging, and true to his word.

So how can he say, I will save you no more, and then proceed to save the Israelites? Well, to answer that question, I think we need to look a little bit further around the Old Testament.

Because there are quite a number of passages in the Old Testament which show the Lord threatening a nation or a group of people with judgment and disaster, and then not bringing the disaster upon them because they hear his threat and it leads them to repent, which is exactly what the threat was intended to do.

[27 : 42] Let me give you two classic examples which I think will shed light on our passage in Judges 10. Do you remember Jonah? Jonah and his message that he was sent to take to the people of Nineveh by the Lord.

After he's been down to the bottom of the sea and the great fish, and has then been released and brought back to dry land, he goes to Nineveh, and his announcement to Nineveh is a prophecy. It's a word from the Lord to the savage people of Nineveh.

He says, 40 days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown. It's a very short sermon, but it's one that makes your ears tingle. It would have made your ears tingle if you'd been a Ninevite.

God is going to overthrow this city in 40 days. Now you remember the story? The king of Nineveh hears this terrifying announcement. He puts on sackcloth immediately, sits in ashes, and issues a proclamation throughout the city, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.

Even the beasts have to wear sackcloth. Let everyone, he says, turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish.

[28 : 53] And the people heed the king's proclamation. They repent. And the account goes on. When God saw how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

So he said something terrifyingly severe, but when he saw the people's repentance, he altered course, and he spared them. Now my other example comes from Jeremiah chapter 18.

And this is a passage where Jeremiah is announcing a prophecy, a word from the Lord to the people of Judah. And he says this. The Lord is speaking through the prophet. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation concerning which I've spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

So do you see the principle by which the Lord operates? His announcements of coming disaster are sometimes, not always, but sometimes provisional. He threatens a nation with disaster, but he is more than willing to alter course if that nation responds to the threat by repenting.

Now that surely is what is happening here in Judges chapter 10. He says there in verse 13, I will save you no more. Go and cry out to the gods that you've chosen. Let them save you in your time of distress.

[30 : 21] But the people repent in verse 15. We've sinned, they respond. Do to us whatever seems good. Please deliver us. And then there are signs of repentance. They put away the foreign gods and serve the Lord.

Now, as I said a moment ago, it proves to be a shallow and short-lived repentance. But despite its shallowness, the Lord is moved to pity and he alters course.

That final phrase in verse 16 there is a lovely phrase. Not very well translated, I think, in our ESV Bibles. A better reading would be, the Lord could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

He saw what a wretched state the people of Israel were in because of their unfaithfulness to him.

He saw signs of repentance and out of his compassion and love for them, he did not follow through on his threat to save them no more.

Because the very next thing that happens is that the Ammonite army come into Gilead to fight with Israel and the Lord then provides the Israelites with this strong man, this mighty warrior Jephthah, who rescues them.

[31 : 27] So the Lord is not fickle. He's consistent. He's compassionate. Sometimes he threatens disaster in Old Testament history. But if the people repent, he stays his hand and he doesn't let the blow fall.

Now the situation for us today, at this period of history, is rather different. We have the same compassionate God, but we live on this side of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, who is the final and only Savior.

Jesus is God's final appeal to the human race. There will be no more Jephthahs or Samsons for us. We don't need them now because the Son of God has provided a full final rescue for us.

But repentance is required of us now. Not shallow, not short term, but real and serious. Because a final day of judgment is coming.

And when that day comes, the Lord will not stay his hand, but will bring disaster upon the unrepentant. The whole history of the Bible leads to that great and awesome day, and we need to be ready for it.

[32 : 46] Israel's severe problems come to a head in the last two verses of chapter 10. The Ammonite warriors are summoned to fight in Gilead, in verse 17.

And the Israelites also get their forces together at Mizpah, which is a town in Gilead. But in verse 18, the Israelites, with fearful and blank faces, are looking at each other and saying, who is going to lead the charge against the Ammonites?

Whoever does it will become the leader of all Gilead. Now let's just look at the way that Jephthah is introduced at the start of chapter 11. His problem, verse 1, is not his military ability, but his mother.

She was a prostitute. So Jephthah was an illegitimate son of Gilead. Gilead the father would take his name from a Gilead way back, who was, I think, a great, great grandson of Jacob.

Jacob begat Joseph, who had Manasseh, who had Machia, who had Gilead. That was the original Gilead. So this Gilead would have taken his name from that one. So this Gilead had plenty of legitimate sons, but he had this one illegitimate son.

[34 : 00] And because Jephthah was illegitimate, he was driven out of the family home and out of the family inheritance by his half brothers, Gilead's legitimate sons.

And he went to live in this place called the land of Tob, a few miles to the east of Gilead. And a band of thugs and brigands collected around him. And look at verse 3.

They collected around him and they went out with him. Not, I think, to the cinema. Presumably it means they went out on raids, relieving the local landowners of their cattle and sheep.

So Jephthah at this stage is an outcast. He's disinherited, he's illegitimate, and he has despicable companions. And yet, it is to this man that the elders of Gilead go in verse 5.

And in verse 6, they say to him, come and be our leader. The one rejected is the one who is turned to in time of trouble.

[34 : 58] Now doesn't that pattern exactly mirror what we've just seen in chapter 10? Because in chapter 10, the Lord is rejected. He is forsaken and abandoned, almost forgotten.

But when trouble comes, it's to him that the people turn for help. Now that's a pattern that runs right the way through the Bible. Think again of developing history.

Think of Joseph, rejected by his brothers, hated by them for his dreams, and sold by them into slavery. And yet many years later, the rejected rescuer is the one who saves his family in Egypt and provides for them.

Think of David. He was despised by his brothers when he was a young lad and nearly murdered several times by Saul. And yet this rejected one was raised up by God to be the shepherd of Israel. And then think further yet down the line of history. Think of Jesus, thought to be illegitimate, rejected, scorned, hated by the religious establishment in Jerusalem, and eventually crucified by them.

[36 : 04] And yet it was through the very hatred and rejection and crucifixion that he was eventually able to save his people. He came to his own people, but his own people did not receive him.

Or think of the way that Isaiah puts it. He was despised and rejected by men. Despised, and we esteemed him not. But it's the very rejection of Jesus and the crucifying of Jesus that has made our salvation possible.

And let's notice just one other thing finally about Jephthah. This rejected rescuer has to become the ruler.

You see in verse 11, the elders and people of Gilead make him their head and leader. Again, it's just the same with Jesus. Despised and rejected, but raised up to be lord as well as rescuer, to be ruler as well as savior.

All the threads of history eventually find their way to him. He is history's goal, and he is history's judge. For us to be rescued by him inevitably entails being ruled by him.

[37 : 21] And in submitting to his rule, we find our significance and our purpose. We shall find it nowhere else. Let's bow our heads and we'll pray.

Despised Lord Jesus, rejected by men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief, and yet it was your wounds which brought us our healing.

It was this rejection of you that brought us salvation, eternal hope and joy, and the prospect of being with you forever.

So please, dear Lord Jesus, help us to honor you, our rejected rescuer, to honor you as the one who has been made lord and king forever.

That is your position eternally. We rejoice in it, and we pray that you'll keep each of us striving to serve you, to love you, and to honor you all our days, until we meet you at the throne.

[38 : 36] And we ask it for your dear name's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.