

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE TISHBITE

And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

II Kings 1:8

Men love fanfare and a sweeping panorama of activity and oratorical magnificence which amazes all with its grandeur and causes large numbers of people to sit up and take notice. Yet GOD has always been pleased to manifest HIS most profound messages to men through the most obscure of messengers and circumstances which are as unpredictable as they are hidden from the multitudes.

We see this in the case of Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the LORD, being singled out as one in whom the mercy of GOD would be displayed. We see it in Abraham as the LORD called him out of the heathen darkness of Ur of the Chaldees and appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, delivering to him the word of HIS promise and HIS determination to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. We see it as HE moved Abraham to send his servant to his home country to fetch a wife for Isaac, (Rebekah), who would bear both the son whom the LORD loved, (Jacob) and the one whom HE hated (Esau). In this chain of events HE would demonstrate HIS everlasting love of those whom HE has chosen in CHRIST and his unchanging rejection of those who HE has ordained unto destruction, so that both the glory of HIS grace and mercy and HIS sovereign prerogative to make some vessels unto honor and some to dishonor might be seen.

We see it in the events which caused Joseph to be sold into slavery in Egypt, so that the LORD might demonstrate HIS provision for Jacob and the house of Israel. We see it in the LORD's appearance unto the stuttering shepherd, Moses, in a burning bush, sending him in the power of the GREAT I AM to lead HIS people out of Egypt. We see it in HIS purpose to destroy the Philistines with a handful of men, led by Gideon. We see it in HIS use of a blind Nazarite (Samson) to bring judgment upon the same.

We see it as HE raised up a young shepherd boy to destroy the mighty warrior, Goliath, with nothing but a sling and a stone. Then as HE installed this same David as the King of Judah from his relative obscurity as the youngest son of Jesse. We see it in the bringing of the very forerunner of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, to break upon the scene clothed in a leathern girdle, eating locusts and wild honey, and pointing out the ONE who is the CHRIST. Then we see our LORD HIMSELF, being born of a virgin mother in a cattle stall. No one knew of HIS coming except a handful of those whom the LORD was pleased to enlighten. HE grew up in the nondescript village of Nazareth ("*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*") (John 1:46) as the SON of a lowly carpenter and there was no beauty in HIM that we might desire HIM. "*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*" (Mar 6:3)

As Moses is to the law, so is Elijah to the prophets as we see demonstrated on the mount of Transfiguration, yet this man who is considered the epitome of the prophets is brought forth without noble birth, without formal education, and without a title of any kind, being known simply

as, Elijah the Tishbite. We are not even certain what a Tishbite is though many have conjectured that this has reference to his dwelling in the city of Tishbe or Toshab. The scripture does specifically say that he was of the inhabitants of Gilead. (see I Kings 17:1) Gilead is a region west of the river Jordan and south of the land of Moab which is primarily noted by a mountain of the same name, Mt. Gilead. It was here that Jacob was overtaken by Laban (see Gen 31:23) and here that Jacob raised up a pillar of stones as a witness or boundary between him and Laban, calling it Galeed (i.e.; witness heap). (see Gen.31:45-55)

It was also to this very mountain that those who were fearful and trembling were sent when the LORD reduced Gideon's forces from 32,000 men to 10,000. Some have said that this region is called Gilead because in Arabic this means rugged, rough, and untamed.

So we see this Elijah the Tishbite break on the scene completely unannounced and without introduction into the presence of King Ahab to pronounce the fact that the LORD would withhold the rain from Ahab's kingdom for three and a half years. (see James 5:17) He then left the presence of Ahab (who no doubt scoffed at this proclamation) and was sustained by the LORD who sent ravens to feed him by the Brook Cherith until such time as it was dried up (due to the lack of rain) according to the LORD's purpose.

For the LORD had a widow in Zarephath, (see John 4:4) upon whom HIS special love was to be demonstrated, as the LORD sent HIS messenger, Elijah the Tishbite, to eat the very last morsel of her food. Yet he who was sent to eat her food was also the same one who was sent to bring her a message of hope which she could not have imagined since she was ready to perish. (see I Kings 17:12) The LORD always makes provision for HIS people though HE often sends it in a form that would defy human understanding.

Who among men could have ever devised the unfolding of redemption through the death and resurrection of the Eternal SON of GOD? Who could have even imagined it, let alone participated in its efficacious power. Did this woman have anything to do with the lasting supply of meal and oil? Could she even fully describe it or explain how it came to be? Could she have caused the prophet to visit her dwelling or even known that such deliverance was nigh? Who made her to differ from another, and what did she have that she did not receive?

The LORD ordained all of this to occur in order that HE might reveal the glory of HIS sovereign grace, as this woman was a gentile who was favored over many Jewish widows who were no doubt in equally dire circumstances. *"But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow."* (Luke 4:25-26)

Those Jews to whom he spoke despised the declaration of GOD's sovereign right to show mercy to whom HE wills even as the men of religion do this very day. *"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."* (Luke 4:28-29) They could not destroy HIM then nor can they in the present day prevent the obscure messengers of HIS grace and mercy from declaring it from the housetops and the lowest valleys in which the poor in spirit lay hungering and thirsting.

The Tishbite was not done for he yet had a date with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel as well as a meeting with the LORD that he might be reminded that the power of his message was not in the outward form but rather in the power of HIM who hides things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes. (see I Kings 19:4-13) This Tishbite was exactly what the LORD made him to be, and no power in earth or hell could change the purpose for which he was sent. In this we see the LORD JESUS CHRIST, born in a stable in Bethlehem, yet ordained as the SAVIOR of the LORD's people whom HE loved before the foundations of the Earth were ever laid. Being the fullness of the GODHEAD bodily HE has declared HIM whom no man can see nor has seen at any time. *"Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"* (1Cor 1:30)