

Acts of the Apostles study 9 – Tabitha (Dorcas) :-

Read Acts chapter 9, verses 32 – 43:-

It would be easy to jump from the conversion of Paul, straight to the story of Cornelius in chapter 10. However, Luke in writing his history of the early church includes the events at Lydda and Joppa. This is important because it is part of the record of the outreach by the early believer, guided by the Holy Spirit, to the Gentile communities. Remember that Philip had been moved by the Spirit to evangelise this region. See Acts chapter 8, verses 39 – 40.

The town of Lydda is some 11 miles inland from Joppa (now Yafo, a suburb of Tel Aviv, official name Tel Aviv- Yafo). After the end of the persecution promoted by Saul, Peter is recorded as visiting groups of believers in different towns in Judea. His visit to Lydda is recorded in verses 32 – 35.

Verses 32 – 35:-

At the healing of Aeneas at Lydda, Peter uses the familiar words of the Lord Jesus himself. (see Matthew chapter 9, verse 6). The Sharon valley, along the sea coast of Judea, at this time was populated in part by Gentiles. These ‘outsiders’ would be among those questioning and turning to the Lord. (verse 35). Luke, the author of Acts, was recording further outreach to the Gentile communities as the Gospel spread in Judea and Samaria.

Verses 36 – 41:-

Dorcas (Tabitha) is the only woman ‘disciple’ so called in the New Testament. Her name ‘Tabitha’ (in Aramaic) and ‘Dorcas’ (in Greek) means Gazelle. Her care for others, especially the widows was noteworthy and obviously greatly appreciated – see verse 39. The believers at Joppa heard that Peter was at Lydda and sent two of their number to ask him to come to them. Peter at once responded to the call! On his arrival the gathered mourners told of the care and love Dorcas had shown them. Again Peter followed the example of the Lord Jesus (See Mark chapter 5, verses 17 – 43) and excluded the crowd from the room. His prayer was answered and Dorcas (Tabitha) was restored to life. See Matthew chapter 10, verses 5-8 for the authority given to the Apostles.

Verses 42 – 43:-

These last two verses in the chapter are of importance! The miracle would soon be well known throughout the town. The gossip at the shops and the communal well / water-supply was the only means of getting and sharing news. In this case the Christian disciples would be getting a ‘good press’.

Don’t miss the importance of the last verse! *“He (Peter) stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a Tanner”*. Remember that any contact with dead bodies was forbidden to a strict Jew. Tanning then was an ‘unclean’ industry and Peter should have had no contact with a tanner. He was already thinking and working ‘outside of the box’ of strict Jewish orthodoxy. Simon the Tanner would most likely be a Gentile convert. The Holy Spirit was already preparing Peter for the next encounter!

Read on into Acts chapters 10 and 11 to understand more of the great plan of the Lord God for the development of His Church.