

### Further Miracles in the Apostle Peter's Ministry

#### Acts 9:29-43

Acts 9:29-43: *"And he (Saul) spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. <sup>30</sup> When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. <sup>31</sup> Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. <sup>32</sup> Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. <sup>34</sup> And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. <sup>35</sup> So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.*

*<sup>36</sup> At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. <sup>37</sup> But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. <sup>38</sup> And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. <sup>39</sup> Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. <sup>40</sup> But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. <sup>42</sup> And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. <sup>43</sup> So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner."*

#### Background Notes

The first part of Acts 9 is the account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, the great champion of Christianity. How ironic that Saul, who went to Damascus to persecute the Church, became the apostle to whom God revealed the great truth of the Church as the body of Christ. Such are the sovereign ways and power of God!

Saul began to preach the gospel immediately, even before he went to the "school of God" in Arabia. *"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God"* (v20). This is a lesson for all new believers. Start sharing your faith right away! Don't wait until you're "trained" in evangelism – just share with others what God has done for you. Your training will go on all your life.

Saul continued to preach, even under the threat of death. *“He spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus”* (v29-30). Back home in Tarsus, Saul undoubtedly continued to preach the gospel.

The book of Acts primary focus shifts to the ministry of Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, in the chapters following his conversion. However, at the end of chapter 9 and in chapter 10, the focus is on the continued ministry of Peter. Acts 9 tells of two miracles in the ministry of Peter, and chapter 10 gives the account of the conversion of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, through Peter’s ministry. Remember, Peter was given the “keys of the kingdom” (Matthew 16), and just as he “opened the door” of the Church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), so Peter was used to open the door of the Church for the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius.

The first mention of Christians as “saints” is found in Acts 9:13: *“Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.”* The first reference to churches outside the original church at Jerusalem is found in verse 31: *“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified.”* Saul, the primary threat and main promoter of persecution, was now converted, so the churches had a rest. There was a respite from the heavy persecutions that had been going on under Saul’s direction.

So the gospel was spreading and bearing fruit, according to God’s plan, and just as the Lord had told his disciples: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The healing of Aeneas and the raising of Dorcas illustrate the salvation and resurrection of the believer.

The town of Lydda (v32) is the modern area of Lod, where Israel’s international airport is located today. Through Peter’s ministry, a man named Aeneas was healed there - and immediately he was able to walk, even though he had been paralyzed for eight years.

Then Peter traveled a short way along the Plain of Sharon to Joppa, on the Mediterranean Sea coast. Joppa is the modern city of Jaffa, and it is part of “greater Tel-Aviv” today. There a godly woman had died. The woman was Dorcas (Greek), or Tabitha (Aramaic). She was greatly mourned because she had done many wonderful deeds of kindness and charity. But Peter, through the power of God, raised her from the dead.

Notice that in both miracles, Peter followed the same pattern that our Lord used. When our Lord healed a paralyzed man by the pool of Bethesda He said, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” Peter said to Aeneas, ‘Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat.’ Aeneas was healed, and immediately got up and walked.

But when our Lord raised Jairus’s daughter to life, He used a different pattern. He put the mourners out of the room, and then He told the young girl, “Young girl, get up!” Using the same pattern as the Lord, Peter sent the mourners out of Dorcas’ room, and then he prayed. Then he turned to the dead woman and said, “Tabitha, get up!” and she opened her eyes. Peter gave her a hand to help her up, and then presented her alive to the people. As a result of these two miracles, we read that many people turned to the Lord.

The miracles of the Bible are not like the “magic” of fairy tales. ***Biblical miracles illustrate spiritual truth!*** I believe these two miracles together illustrate the Christian life. In the healing of Aeneas we have the salvation of the sinner. In the raising of Dorcas we have the resurrection of the believer. In between, we have what should characterize every Christian – good works.

Until we’re saved from the disease of sin, we are paralyzed – we cannot walk, and we can’t live the life that God intends for us. We can’t help ourselves, and we can’t help others. When we become Christians, we are enabled to “walk” - to live the Christian life. Goodness and kindness should characterize us so much so that people will turn to the Lord as a result. Matthew 5:16 says, *“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* And as Dorcas was greatly missed when she died, people should miss us when we die - because we’ve been involved in helping others, and not just living our lives selfishly, for ourselves only.

But the best news is that we will be raised from the dead when the Lord returns! This is illustrated in the miracle of the raising of Dorcas. The resurrection of believers is taught in 1 Corinthians 15:52-54: *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”* The healing of Aeneas illustrates the salvation of the believer, and the raising of Dorcas illustrates the resurrection of the believer.

## **2. The healing of Aeneas and the raising of Dorcas illustrate the restoration and rebirth of Israel.**

In Ezekiel 37, Ezekiel had the well-known “vision of the dry bones,” in which the bones came together, first as dead skeletons, and then bodies with flesh, and finally became living souls. Ezekiel was told that these bones represented the nation of Israel (not the Church). The nation of Israel was scattered and dead, but it would be brought back to life. God

will bring the Jews back to the Land and make them a nation once again - but more than that, He will restore them and revive them. He will give them a new heart and spiritual life. There will be a rebirth of Israel, and a great spiritual restoration when they return to the Lord.

This is predicted in Ezekiel 37 and in other prophetic passages of the Bible, and it is illustrated in the miracles of the healing of Aeneas and raising of Dorcas. At the present time, Israel is still spiritually dead - paralyzed, spiritually speaking. But Israel will be reborn and restored to the Lord in the future. And many will turn to the Lord as a result!

Notice that Aeneas was bedridden for eight years, and then was healed. In biblical numerics, the number "eight" is the number of "new beginning." Israel's restoration will be a new beginning for them, under the New Covenant.

Bible-believing evangelical Christians long for the restoration of Israel. We are like the friends of Dorcas. We appreciate all the good things that have come to the world through Israel - not the least of which is the Messiah and Christianity. The healing of Aeneas and raising of Dorcas illustrate the restoration and rebirth of Israel.

## **Practical Application**

### **Be remembered as a Dorcas - not as a Jehoram!**

Do you know what the Bible says about the Old Testament King Jehoram? Jehoram was one of the evil kings of Judah. 2 Chronicles 21:20 says that *"he died with no one's regret."* How sad! How would you like a comment like that to be made when you die?

How much better to be like Dorcas - to be remembered for your kindness, and for the wonderful things you've done for others, and to be deeply missed! James 1:27 says, *"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble."*

Dorcas wasn't an up-front person in the church. She wasn't in the spotlight. God uses great preachers like Peter and Paul, but He also uses believers who quietly show the kindness and love of Jesus to those who are in need.

Dorcas did her good deeds behind the scenes - but God saw Dorcas! He saw her devotion to Him and to others, and He recorded her name and her good works in Holy Scripture. Dorcas was greatly missed when she died, because she had touched the lives of so many people in her quiet life of service for the Lord.

You, too, can be a Dorcas! Be remembered as a Dorcas - not as a Jehoram!