

I mentioned last week, that v31 served both as a summary and transition. Having described the early ministry of Saul (vv1-30), summarized the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, Luke now describes the ministry of Peter in Lydda (vv32-35) and Joppa (vv36-43). These, as we shall see, were largely Gentile towns within Judea, wherein saints had gathered, and churches were formed. These are two of the churches mentioned back in v31, that had peace, were edified, and walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

- I. His Ministry in Lydda (vv32-35)
- II. His Ministry in Joppa (vv36-43)
- III. Three Purposes of the Passage

I. His Ministry in Lydda (vv32-35)

1. We last saw Peter back in chapter 8:25, returning to Jerusalem after he had ministered north in Samaria.
2. V32—"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."
3. Now that the churches were experiencing a time of peace and rest, Peter was visiting these churches to build them up.
4. Luke says that "he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda"—which is about 20 miles Northwest of Jerusalem.
5. Remember, Luke says he came down to Lydda (even though he actually went north), because Jerusalem is higher in elevation (thus, there's a sense in which, regardless the direction you travel, you always go down from Jerusalem).
6. V33—"There he found a certain man named Aeneas (uh-nee-uhs), who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed."
7. It seems most likely, that Aeneas was one of the saints, who was a part of the church down in Lydda.
8. F.F. Bruce—"It is natural to suppose that Aeneas, the man whom Peter cured at Lydda, was a member of the local Christian group, though this is not expressly stated."
9. The name Aeneas is a Greek name, which means he was a Greek-speaking Jew, or more likely a Greek himself.
10. Luke tells us, he was bedridden eight years and paralyzed—that means, he was unable to leave his bed.
11. He was totally dependent upon the charity and kindness of others, and he could do nothing to alter his situation.
12. We don't know if he had some crippling disease, or else a crippling accident, but his legs no longer worked.
13. Verses 34-35—"And Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.' Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord."
14. (1) It was powerful—"Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you"—that is, the power that healed him, came from Christ.
15. Peter makes very clear, he was not healed by Peter, but that, Peter was only an instrument through which Christ worked.
16. The same is true in the spiritual realm—sinners are not saved by preachers, but by the word they speak.
17. Preachers are merely human instruments, through which, or whereby, God applies His saving power.

18. Likewise, the apostles were human instruments, through which, or whereby, God applied His healing power.
19. (2) It was complete—"Arise and make your bed. Then he arose immediately"—his healing wasn't gradual.
20. No sooner did Peter say "Arise and make your bed" did he arise and make his bed—his healing was instant.
21. There's not a single healing in the Old or New Testaments, that's done in a gradual or slowed process.
22. (3) It was public, v35—"So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord"—here "all" doesn't "every single."
23. It simply means, many people, scattered throughout Lydda and Sharon, knew he was paralyzed and saw him healed.
24. In other words, the miracle, as with the rest of Biblical miracles, was provable and public for all to see.
25. Now, when it says they "turned to the Lord" it means, because of the miracle, they believe the gospel.
26. Nobody ever turns to the Lord simply because of miracles—they turned to the Lord by believing the truth.
27. The miracle was simply a means for them to consider the truth, and to actually believe it for themselves.
28. For example, think of a young couple, who are not Christians, and they both live wretched and immoral lives.
29. Let's say the woman becomes a Christian, and is now a loving, submissive, and pious, follower of Christ.
30. As her husband watches her for several months, he begins to ask the question—what happened to her?
31. And she explains to him what happened—someone shared the truth with her, and she believed on Christ.
32. And so, the husband, begins to ask further questions about the truth, and eventually, he too, believes.
33. He isn't saved because of his wife's conversion; he's saved because he believed the truth of the gospel.
34. But it was the miracle (little 'm') that caused him to begin to seek the truth, that finally led to his salvation.
35. This is how the miracles functioned—nobody was ever saved because of the miracles in and of themselves.
36. They are saved by believing the truth, but the miracle was the means that stirred in them an interest in the truth.
37. John Calvin—"When the Scripture says all, it does not mean every one, but it puts all for many, or for the common sort of men. Therefore, the sense is, that whereas there was but a small number of godly men there, a great part of the people became members of the Church. And so, here we find the fruit of the miracle, as they embraced Christ and His gospel."

II. His Ministry in Joppa (vv36-43)

1. V36—"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."
2. (1) Her name—the name Tabitha is Aramaic and means "gazelle" whereas Dorcas is its Greek translation.

3. This means she was most likely a Greek or Gentile by birth, who had come to believe on Jesus Christ.
4. (2) Her piety—"This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did" and according to v39, these charitable deeds including making tunics and garments for the poor.
5. Simon Kistemaker—"This lady was a true disciple of Jesus Christ, for she lived her Christianity in all that she said and did. She was known for her tireless work among the poor; she kept on doing deeds of kindness and compassion. Apparently, she was blessed with material possessions. Whenever she had opportunity, she lived by the divine injunction to care for the poor."
6. (3) Her death, v37—"But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room."
7. Why the disciples placed her body in an upper room, we are not told—one thing is for certain, they never intended this to serve as her final resting place.
8. In fact, it's likely they placed her there, with the hope that Peter would come, and raise her from the dead.
9. Thus, we learn from vv38-39, that they sent two men to Lydda, to implore him to come quickly to Joppa.
10. Why did they want Peter to come quickly to Joppa, but for the reason to restore their beloved dead sister.
11. Dennis Johnson—"Although the apostles had not yet raised any dead, the placement of Tabitha's body in an upper room to await Peter's arrival suggests that these saints may have hoped not merely for comfort in sorrow, but for life from the dead."
12. Thus, we learn from v39, when Peter came to Joppa "they brought him to the upper room" where Tabitha laid.
13. V40—"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."
14. Why Peter put them out of the room, we are not told, but we are told that he knelt down and prayed (that is, for her resurrection).
15. He then turned to the dead body and said—"Tabitha, arise"—and immediately, her eyes opened, and she sat up.
16. V41—"Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive."
17. This means, she was previously dead, and now she was alive, and assumedly, free from every sickness.
18. From v42 we learn, that news of her resurrection became known throughout all Joppa—"and many believed on the Lord."
19. That is, having heard the story of her resurrection, they inquired into the truth of the gospel, and believed.
20. Notice, how Luke puts it—they "believed on the Lord"—not Peter, or any other apostle—but "the Lord."
21. Why did they believe on the Lord! But because they understood that the power to give life came from Him.

III. Three Purposes of the Passage

1. Here I want to answer this question—why did Luke record these two accounts and place them where he did?
2. Remember, Luke was ultimately inspired by the Holy Spirit, who never does anything without a reason.

3. Thus, the question becomes—what are the reasons that God the Spirit inspired Luke to preserve these two accounts?
4. Think about it brethren—God does nothing without purpose—here we have twelve verses of Holy Scripture—why?
5. Well, I want to suggest to you, there are at least three primary purposes, why the Spirit has placed Acts 9:32-43 in our Bible.
6. (1) To give insight into church life—by this I mean, within these two cities, we have insight into two early churches.
7. Remember, having described the churches in v31, Luke now gives us a further description of two of them.
8. Thus, within these two accounts, we learn three things about early saints (and I want to summarize these things with three words).
9. (a) Sickness—we learn in both Aeneas and then Tabitha, the obvious fact that Christian people suffer sickness.
10. From v32, we learned that Peter went through all parts of the country to preach the gospel and examine the churches.
11. And in coming to Lydda, what did he find, but a man, a disciple, who had been bed ridden for eight years.
12. And then no sooner does he heal him, he gets a message from Joppa, about a believed saint, who fell sick and died.
13. In other words, these are the things that early Christians dealt with, and these are things we must deal with.
14. MH—"How many of the Lord's hidden ones are crippled, diseased, or under some bodily infirmity or other, for years together. The bed of sickness is blessed, upon which Jesus puts his people. They are sure of the frequent visits of their Almighty Physician."
15. (b) Sorrow—here I am thinking about the sorrow that Tabitha's friends experienced when she fell sick and died.
16. Simply put, death and sorrow are realities that all Christians will experience, in this life under the sun.
17. But it's not death directly that I am here thinking about, but the sadness and sorrow that follows in its train.
18. (c) Service—by this I am thinking about Tabitha, and the way she selflessly served the brethren in Joppa.
19. She was greatly missed because she greatly served—her death left an evident whole in her church and community.
20. To put it plainly, she was greatly missed because she greatly served—her presence was missed by everyone.
21. Simon Kistemaker—"Because she was known for her numerous kind deeds to the poor in that area, her sickness and death came as a shock to them and created a void in the Christian community."
22. (2) To prepare for the conversion of the Gentiles—within this passage, we find Peter is being prepared for something to come.
23. While it's true that Saul would be the apostle to the Gentiles, it would be Peter who would take the first step.
24. This we shall see next week, when we get to chapter 10, the conversion of a Roman soldier named Cornelius.
25. In fact, many commentators suggest this is likely why he spent many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner (v43).
26. He goes to Lydda and Joppa, where he heals two Gentiles, and then he stays a long time with Simon, the tanner.

27. This means he worked with animal skins, which was an abomination to the Jews, who considered just a trade as unclean.
28. Thus, regardless if Simon was a Jew or Gentile, seemingly, he was a Christian man, shunned by the Jews.
29. Simon Kistemaker—"Peter's decision to live with Simon the tanner reflects his readiness to separate himself from Jewish legalism and engage in mission work among the Gentiles. In short, his residence with Simon the tanner prepares him for his call to proclaim the gospel in the home of Cornelius the Roman centurion."
30. (3) To reveal the true nature and purpose of Apostolic miracles—I suggest, this is really the main point.
31. In both cases, Peter performed a miracle, which eventually led to the conversion of many people, v35—"So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord" v42—"And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord."
32. In other words, it seems that the miracles themselves, and especially the results of those miracles, are the primary points this passage.
33. This brings me to answer the follow question—why did the Holy Spirit lay such stress upon these miracles?
34. To put the question differently—what were the primary purposes of miracles, and especially these two?
35. Well, I want to suggest three reasons—to reveal the compassion of Christ, verify the messengers of Christ, and picture the salvation of Christ.
36. (a) To reveal the compassion of Christ—by this I mean, within these miracles the heart of God is revealed.
37. Each miracle shows how God is concerned with our physical issues, and in Christ, sympathizes with us.
38. Thus, through the gospels our Savior changed water to wine, and multiplied the loaves, to mee the need of the people.
39. In fact, if you remember, our Savior performed almost identical miracles as these two, in His own ministry.
40. It's as if Peter is merely an extension of Christ's ministry—or perhaps we could say, an extension of His heart of compassion.
41. (b) To verify the messengers of Christ—by this I mean, the miracles verified the apostles as sent by Christ.
42. Now, this assumes something that I've mentioned before, and that is, only apostles were given this ability.
43. Admittedly, there are one or two exceptions, where Evangelists (who served as helpers to the apostles), did miracles.
44. But throughout the OT, only prophets did miracles, and generally speaking, in the NT, only apostles did miracles.
45. And here's the primary reason—miracles were intended to verify the man and message of the miracle worker.
46. Ex.4:1-9—"Then Moses answered and said, 'But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"
47. Lk.9:1—"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases."
48. Lk.9:6—"So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere."
49. Miracles were never intended to function by themselves, or as an end in and of themselves, but always with the word.

50. 2Cor.12:12—"Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."
51. Miracles, here called signs and wonders and mighty deeds were necessary to prove or verify your apostleship.
52. Mk.16:20—"And they went out and preached everywhere, this Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs."
53. Thus, the Holy Spirit preserved the miracles of Peter in Acts 9, to openly verify his identity as an apostle.
54. (c) To picture the salvation of Christ—by this I mean, physical miracles illustrated spiritual salvation.
55. Every miracle within the NT (and the OT also), was a picture or illustration of spiritual and eternal salvation.
56. And the two miracles before us in Acts 9:32-43, suggest to us three things about this salvation—it's merciful, powerful, and personal.
57. (i) It's merciful—mercy is best defined as God's kindness—expressed towards those who are in misery.
58. Thus, within these two people, Aeneas and Tabitha, we have a picture of what all men are, by nature.
59. All men are spiritually crippled and morally bedridden, and thus unable to come to Christ for salvation.
60. Furthermore, all men are not only spiritually crippled, but they are spiritually and morally dead in sin—which means, we are separated from God and void of any spiritual life.
61. This is the condition that God finds every sinner—spiritually and morally crippled and dead in our sins.
62. Eph.2:4-6—"But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."
63. (ii) It's powerful—only God has the power to heal a paralyzed man to walk, and a dead woman to life.
64. Just as Christ healed the crippled legs of Aeneas, and gave to the dead body of Tabitha, He gave strength to our spiritual legs, and life to our dead souls.
65. Notice, in both cases, Peter speaks to those who were unable to natively comply with his command—"Arise and make your bed" and "Tabitha, arise."
66. This is exactly what we do in evangelism—we speak to those who are spiritual and morally crippled and dead.
67. And yet, the power to give them life and enable them to obey the summons, actually comes from the word.
68. When Peter told Aeneas to arise and make his bed, the power for him to do so, came along with Peter's words (the same was true of Tabitha – the power for her to arise, came along with the words of Peter).
69. (iii) It's personal—notice how personal both of these miracles were, v34—"Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you" v40—"Tabitha, arise."
70. In both cases, Peter called each one by name—and this is what happens when Christ calls His people to Himself.
71. He speaks to them mercifully, powerfully, and personally, and He says to each one—"Arise, come to Me, and follow Me."
72. Jn.5:25—"Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live."