

## Acts 9:32-43 ACTS-[24]-PETER at LYDDA & JOPPA

PRELIMS. Saul has been converted but has had to be 'shipped' away to Tarsus as the Jews tried to kill him – thanks to Barnabas! The church had a period of rest and prosperity “*grew in numbers*”![31]

### PETER at LYDDA

We see now the **missionary strategy** of the apostles! It was **not** done by **one**-man, no cult-heroes, but by several of the apostles. We have seen **Stephen's** ministry and how he had to give his life for the Cause of Christ! **Philip** ministering in Samaria, in a desert, and up the coast from Azotus to Caesarea. We have seen **Saul** converted and ministering in Damascus and Jerusalem **so that** Jews are lynching him! Now Luke (rather the Holy Spirit) directs our attention to the ministry of **Peter**!

Well Peter, like Philip, goes on **tour** up the same Mediterranean coast, Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea. Maybe he is building on the work of Philip (I am not sure of the exact **timescale** or **chronology**!) But there **are** “*saints*” there! \*One wonders how **quickly** they became 'saints' in the NT! **Little** is recorded of how these early Xns **became** believers. Did they have long periods of struggle? Was it a **quick/overnight** thing? Did they immediately believe? Were they baptised on a **nominal** external belief without **waiting** for **fruit** to bear **testimony** to its **reality**?

The word 'saints' really refers to a **group** of believers rather than individual believers – and of course it means separate ones! Separate **from** the world! Separated **to God**! Means 'holy' as God is holy/separate!

Lesson here in that Peter immediately **visited** “*the saints in Lydda*”[32]. **APP** What is the **first** place you visit when you go to a new city? It ought to be our business when we are away from home to seek out the people of God - not go on 'the prowl'! Find out where God's people are.

I am sure Peter had no idea what the believers were like! I wonder did he find what he expected? We all have '**expectations**' of what believers in **other places** are like? As soon as we see them we make a **judgment**! Don't we? As soon as you walk into a new church, you make a judgment. It is said that people decide within the first **seven minutes** of they are going to come back! Peter, being a Jew, **must** have been had some type of image of what **pagan** believers would be like?

Well, he “*found a man named Aeneas a **paralytic** who had been **bed-ridden** for eight years*”[33]. I take it he was a “*saint*” as he was “*there*” when Peter visited the *saints*. People in **all** kinds of **health**, believe in the Lord. Cripples, blind, deaf, dumb and even the **bed-ridden**!

Here is a man paralysed and he believes in the Lord. His **misfortune** does **not inhibit** his faith. **APP** Remember Pilgrims Progress and **Pliable** and the very **first obstacle** on the way decides the matter for him!

If Aeneas had been praying for **healing** then his prayer is about to be answered! For when God works, He works at both ends – therefore Peter is directed right to his bed! Of course Aeneas may not have been praying at all. In that case he was in for a lovely surprise! Common for Xns!

It seems to me that the power to perform miracles was **spasmodic** – it was something that came and went, even with the Apostles! Paul was unable to heal himself of his thorn; he had to leave Trophimus ill at Miletus; and tongue-speaking was **only** “*as the Spirit gave them utterance*”! **All** the gifts were **only** as the Spirit **enabled** them or 'came upon' them! There were times when they **could not** perform miracles– when they hadn't prayed and fasted for long enough as Jesus said to the complaining disciples “*this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting*” [**only** in AV mss in Mat17:21]

How lovely then that the Spirit spoke to Peter and enabled him to perform this miracle for this man he had **never met before**. Complete **foreigners**! What a **bonding** it must have made! There must have been real **fellowship** afterwards! There must have been a **rapport** between them! If there were any suspicions between them, then they vanished!

**What** was **central** and what was the **link** in this fellowship? What was the **common denominator**? Jesus Christ! “*Jesus Christ heals you*”[34] That was the common source of their union – their **interest** in Jesus Christ! It wasn't Peter who was the **hero** of the hour– it was Jesus Christ!

It was truly a wonderful thing that happened - one of the signs of a miracle is it occurs **immediately** “*Immediately Aeneas got up*”[35a]

Yet a **more wonderful** thing happened! “*All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord*”[35b]! I am sure 'all' was used in the general sense, not the absolute sense meaning every single person without exception! But they “*turned to the Lord*” - **what** did that

**mean**? Did it mean every one of them were **saved**? **Regenerated**? Did what Paul said in [Eph 2:4] happen to them, ie, although they were by (human) nature the children of wrath, yet **God** in His mercy **made** them **alive** in Christ? Were they truly saved by the grace of God?

Or was it just a **nominal turning** towards God? Was it just that their prejudices against Christ, were changed and they became **less** hostile to religion? People can turn to the Lord without giving Him their heart! They can acknowledge His works without submitting to His Lordship!

Whatever, Peter's miracle and act of mercy and help to this person did a lot of **good** in the **community**! Lesson for us in our community!

### **PETER at JOPPA**

Joppa was the **sea-port** of **Jerusalem** and is modern day **Jaffa** which is a suburb of Tel-Aviv!

I used to **think** the church here were slightly **boasting** Tabitha/Dorcas as one of their prime **examples** of someone in real Xn service! Churches **can** boast about what wonderful people they have in their congregations! However, it is **not** the church or the Xns themselves that are exalting Dorcas here, but the **Holy Spirit** for it is Luke, **under inspiration**, that informs us that Dorcas was *“always doing good and helping the poor”*[36]. She does seem to have been a marvellous woman and highly respected by all. As John Knox said when someone wanted to commend him, 'If there is to be commendation, let us leave it until the Day of God'!

Again, a **tragedy** – she **dies**. Bad things do happen to good people! Never be **discouraged** when bad things happen to good people. Its all **part** of the way God 'runs the world' and **strengthens** His people's faith! Be sure of this: **They** would be asking the question 'Why her?' just as we would! Why are the best people taken away? **Never** be **disillusioned** by Providence – for God's ways are *“past finding out! Who has known the mind of the Lord?...For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things”*[Rom 11:33] **No** one can **fathom** out God's mind!

Now they send for Peter who was **10 miles** away in Lydda! **Why** did they send for him? What did they think he would do? Did they **really expect** him to raise her from the dead? Probably not – but just wanted his **comfort** and **fellowship**! In trouble, people want a good man around! They thought nothing about asking him to **travel** 9by **foot**!) 10 miles!

If they did expect Peter to raise her from the dead – we **commend** their **faith** – for no one had been raised from the dead in NT times (only by X + OT prophets)! \* \*By the way, it is about **10yrs since** the crucifixion! Although we may think a lot is happening, it all took time. **God works over time** – through the general, mundane, **everyday events** of **life**.

Anyway, they certainly did not waste time in getting him, for they *“urged him”* to *“come at once”*[38] **APP** It is so important to call for **Xn friends** during a **crisis**! What do **you** do in a crisis? Some people can only think of going for a drink! Be sure **you** call for **Xn friends**. The fellowship itself can be very helpful. Those who do not know X **cannot** provide the **spiritual nourishment, nutrition** and **sustenance** you **need** in a crisis! Too many Xns turn to the wrong 'help' in a crisis – in fact many turn to **means** that **exacerbate** the problem!

It is **only Xns** who can help you in the **long term**! Look at what Paul had to say later *“the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God”*[2Cor2:3]

What was the '**deciding**' **factor** in this miracle? Was it not *“Peter...got down on his knees and prayed”*[40]! **APP** When did **you** last get down on your knees? It usually 'takes a lot' of **pressure** for a man to go down on his knees – **unless** - he is a very godly man! But it works wonders – Peter *“presented her to them alive”*[41] Not without prayer!

Again we have the **impact** this miracle had on the **community**! *“This became known all over Joppa and many people believed in the Lord”* [42] And again we might ask – what did that mean? Were all 'saved'?

Finally – God was 'doing' things to Peter as well as the new believers in Lydda and Joppa. Peter was **growing** and **learning** too! He had obviously learned his lesson from Paul when he was **rebuked** for not mixing and eating with **Gentiles**! We find him here **living** *“with a tanner”*[43]. A tanner was a person who worked with **skins** of animals! And that was one of the **forbidden trades** for Jews! Because you **had** to touch **dead animals** and probably **blood** (and unclean animals also!) So God is **preparing** Peter for the great change in the Church with the Gentiles coming in! They had *“They without us”* says the NT writer, *“should not be made perfect/complete”*[Heb 11:40]! God is performing a **double act**! The teacher as well as the congregation!!