–Save This Page as a PDF–

Signs and Miracles Follow Peter 9: 32-43

38-42 AD
Luke's data for this period is clearly sketchy,
He is better informed about the period after the Jerusalem council.

Signs and miracles follow Peter DIG: What is the purpose of these signs and wonders (see **2:22** and **43, 4:30, 5:12-14, 9:35)? Although Peter had healed many people, he had never raised anyone from the dead. What might he have felt as he went into Tabitha's home? Which of Yeshua's miracles do these two incidents remind you of?**

REFLECT: Why is it that Tabitha could be raised, but Stephen died, even though Peter was there also (8:2)? How would you explain God's ways to Stephen's widow or mother? How might what happened as a result of Stephen's death and Tabitha's resurrection help you to understand? How have you experienced God's healing in your life? What resulted from this healing for others?

The scene now shifts from **Sha'ul** back to **Peter,** who will again be the central figure in the narrative for the next three chapters. Since we know that **Sha'ul/Paul** will be the emissary to **the Gentiles**, because **the Gentiles** need to be saved **(Genesis 12:3)**. Only **Peter** could do this since he had **the keys to the Kingdom**. **Sha'ul** had been converted and had boldly proclaimed **his** newfound faith both in **Damascus** and **Jerusalem**. **His** preaching had so enraged **his** opponents that first in **Damascus**, then in **Yerushalayim**, they tried to **kill him**. At this point **he** had fled from **Tziyon** to **his** hometown of Tarsus. Ten years later, as recorded in **Acts 13, Paul's** ministry would dominate the rest of the book.[200]

The continued expansion of the Messianic Community outside **Jerusalem** required movement on **Peter's** part. The statement that **Peter was traveling among them all** shows the ceaseless itinerant character of **Peter's** ministry at that time. On one of **his** trips, **he came down as well to the kedoshim (holy ones) living in Lydda,** on the plain below Yerushalayim, about ten miles east of Joppa and Modern Tel Aviv less than two miles from David Ben-Gurion Airport**.** When **Peter** arrived there, **he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years – he was paralyzed** and faced the prospect of being bedridden for the rest of **his** life**. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Messiah Yeshua** (not **Peter**) **heals you. Get up and pack up your bed." Immediately, he got up! Messiah**, and **His apostles healed** with a word or a touch; **their healings** were instantaneous and complete. The B'rit Chadashah knows nothing of gradual **healings**. The spiritual fruit was dramatic. **All [the Jews]** who **lived in Lydda and the Plain of Sharon** north of **Lydda, saw him, and they turned to the Lord.** But the majority of the people who lived on **the** coastal **plain of Sharon** were Gentiles, and **they** also **turned to the Lord (9:32-35). Jesus** had commissioned **Peter** to care for **His sheep (John 21:15-17)**, and **Peter** was faithful to fulfill that commission.

In Joppa (ten miles northwest of **Lydda**)**, there was a disciple** whose Aramaic name was **Tabitha,** and **her Greek** name was **Dorcas,** meaning *gazelle*. So **she** had both a **Jewish** name and a **Greek** name probably because **she** lived in an area that was primarily Gentile. **She was full of mitzvot and tzedakah** (charitable works and giving alms)**,** and made **coats** for **widows, which she continually did. In those days, she became ill and died.** This was a considerable blow to the believers there. **When they had washed her for burial,** which was customary. However, instead of burying **her** immediately, **they placed her in an upstairs room**. Now according to **the Oral Law** (see the commentary on **The Life of**

Christ, to see link click Ei – The Oral Law), in **Jerusalem** a body had to be buried before sundown, but outside **Tziyon** a body could remain unburied for three days and three nights. **Since Lydda was near** the coastal city of **Joppa, the disciples – hearing that Peter was there – sent two men** on the half-day journey **to him, begging him, "Please come to us without delay" (9:36-38)!**[201]

We usually think of **the apostles** as leaders who told other people what to do, but often the people commanded them (for **Peter's** philosophy of ministry see **First Peter Chapter 5**)! **Peter** was a leader who served the people and was ready to respond to their call. **He** had the authority to **heal**, and **he** used it to glorify **God** and help people, not to promote **himself**.[202]

No doubt **they** had also heard of **his healing** of **Aeneas**, and they believed that **Peter** could use **his** authority as an emissary to help Dorcus. There were many believers in the city of Joppa and if **miracles** were commonly practiced, one of them could have come and brought **Dorcus** back to life. But contrary to the teaching of many today, the Messianic community in the book of **Acts** was not a miracle-working community. Rather, it was a Messianic community with miracle-working **apostles**. Therefore, the believers in **Lydda** had faith that **the Lord** could raise **Dorcus** from the dead through **Peter**'s authority as an emissary.

So Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room and **he** saw firsthand how much **they** loved **Dorcas** and what a loss **her** death was for the Messianic congregation at **Joppa. All the widows were crying** and were wearing **all the coats and other clothing Dorcas had made while she was with them (9:39). They** probably wore the things **she had made** to show that **she** was worthy of the resurrection.

As **Peter** had seen **the Lord** do when **He** raised **Jairus' daughter** (see the Commentary on **The Life of Christ Fh – Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman**), **he sent them all outside, and he got down on his knees and prayed (9:40). Prayer** is essential to all successful ministry because it acknowledges dependence on **ADONAI**. **Now to Him who is able to do far beyond all that we ask or imagine, by means of His power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20). Peter** learned the importance of **prayer** from **His Lord**, had seen and heard **Him** many times in communion with **His Father (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12-13)**.

Then, having finished praying, **he turned to the body and** said: **Tabitha, get up! She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and raised her up. Then he called the kedoshim and widows and presented her alive (9:41).** We must remember that **Tabitha** was not *resurrected*; **she** was *resuscitated* to **her** old life, and **she** would die again.[203] The gift of **healing** was the same for **the apostles** as it was for **their Master**. **They healed** with a word or a touch, **they healed** organic diseases from birth (see **Ap – Peter Heals a Lame Beggar**), **they healed** instantly and **they** raised the dead (see **Ci – Paul Raised Eutychus From the Dead at Troas**). Anyone who claims to have the gift of **healing** today should be able to do likewise. For **those** who loved **Tabitha their** joy must have been inexpressible. However, **God** did not raise **her** solely for **their** benefit, as would soon become evident. Art by Sarah Beth Baca: see more information on Links and Resources.

Because the book of **Acts** is a transitional book, **God** used miracles as confirming signs that the gospel was true. **He** also used them to authenticate **the apostles** as **His** messengers. **YHVH** used **the raising of Tabitha** as the spark for the salvation of **the city**. **And it became known throughout Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord (9:42).** This footnote serves as a bridge between this passage and the following account of Cornelius' conversion. These were challenging days for **Peter**, as the walls of **his** lifelong prejudices came tumbling down. First came the conversion of **the Samaritans** (see **Ba – Simon the Sorcerer**), with whom no self-respecting **Jew** had any dealings. Yet **Peter** was obedient to welcome **them** as **brothers and sisters** in the faith. Soon **he** will come to an even greater shock as

the Gentiles enter the Messianic Community.

So it happened that Peter stayed on in Joppa for several days with Simon, a tanner (9:43). In this seemingly insignificant footnote, yet another barrier comes crashing down, as **Peter stayed** with **a tanner**. **Tanning** was considered an unclean occupation **(Leviticus 11:40)** in first-century **Jewish** society since it dealt with the skins of dead animals. Thus **tanners** had to live fifty cubits outside the city limits. But obviously this **tanner** was a believer and the fact that **Peter** would stay with **him** foreshadowed what would follow in **Acts 10.**

A closer look at Luke, Women and Ministry: Luke was a Gentile who wrote more of the New Covenant than anyone else including Paul. That being said, an understanding of non-**Jewish women** in the Greco-Roman world is important. Roman **women** were patronesses, benefactors, and business owners. The Hellenistic revolution had considerably changed the role of **Greek women** in various places, especially Macedonia and Asia Minor. These **women** held distinguished civic and federal magistracies. The offices **they** held include federal positions that are entirely absent from **Acts**. In such an environment it should not be a surprise to find a **Priscilla (Acts 18:2** and **18-19; First Corinthians 16:19)** or a **Lydia (16:14),** or **a number of prominent Greek women (17:12)**, among the early converts to the Way who continued to exercise important roles both within and without the Messianic Community/Church, especially as hostesses and patronesses, but also as prophetesses, teachers and the like.

One key to understanding how such roles for **women** were possible in an admittedly strong patriarchal Mediterranean culture is understanding how status was achieved during the Roman Empire. Increasingly money was able to create social status, standing, and civic positions for both **women** and men in the Roman world, as the older class distinctions and emphasis on inherited or birth rank and ethnic origins became less important to determine the future of **women** and men. It is by studying how the larger Roman world worked that one can better assess the roles of believing **women** as portrayed by **Luke**.

Luke, like Paul, like other early believers thought that their faith committed them to the reforming of some of the existing patriarchal structures so that **women** could play more vital and varied roles in the community of faith. To that end, **Luke** presents **five cameos** of important believing **women** in a variety of roles they assumed. In **Miriam,** the mother of **John Mark (12:12-17)** and in **Lydia (16:12-40)**, we see **women** assuming the role of “mother” or patron and

benefactor to the then fledgling believing communities in **Yerushalayim** and Philippi respectively. Like **them**, in the story of **Tabitha** (see above), a notable female disciple with an ongoing ministry, we find someone providing material aid to a particularly needy group of early Hellenistic **Jewish widows (6:1-7)**. **Luke's** mention of **Philip's four virgin daughters who prophesied** is brief **(21:9)**, but when compared to **Acts 2:17** it is sufficient to show that **women** played important roles in the early Messianic Community/Church. Perhaps the most important is **Luke's** reference to **Priscilla** as a teacher of a noble early Christian evangelist, Apollos, in **Acts 18**. We will examine these stories in more detail as the commentary goes on.

In the final analysis, by the very fact that **Luke** portrays **women** performing these various roles, **he** shows how the gospel liberates and creates new opportunities for **women**. It is probably true that **Luke** is not interested in **women** and **their** roles for **their** own sake; rather **he** stresses how the gospel manifested itself and progressed among **the female** population in various parts of the Mediterranean world. In **Jerusalem (1:14, 12:12-17)**, in Thessalonica **(7:4)**, in Berea **(17:12)**, and in Athens **(17:34)**, we find **women** being converted or serving the congregations of **God** in roles that in many cases would not have been available to them apart from that community. Thus, **Luke** lists the progress of **women** as part of the progress and effects of the gospel. Though it is not perhaps one of **his** major themes in **Acts**, nonetheless **he** takes care to reveal to **his** audience that where the gospel went, **women**, often prominent, were some of the first, foremost, and most faithful converts to the Christian faith, and that **their** conversion led to **their** assuming new roles in the service of the gospel. That being said, **Luke's** portrait of **women** in the early life of the Messianic Community/Church needs to be compared to and supplemented by Paul's more full and accurate record (see the commentary on **Genesis Lv – I Do Not Permit a Woman to Teach or Have Authority Over Men** – which I would highly recommend that you read, it is a thorough examination of the Greek text and my conclusions are quite different than the title would suggest).[204]