

Research: Raising of Dorcas by Peter

Acts 9:36-41

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

“Joppa (modern Jaffa) was the ancient seaport for Jerusalem. Situated on the coast thirty-five miles northwest of the capital city and ten miles beyond Lydda, it possesses the only natural harbor on the Mediterranean between Egypt and Ptolemais (the OT city of Acco). Through Joppa Solomon brought cedar beams from Lebanon to build the temple (II Chron. 2:16); from it Jonah sailed for Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). Its rival in NT times was Caesarea, thirty miles to the north, which Herod the Great, because the people of Joppa hated him, built into a magnificent new port city and provincial capital” (EBC 9.382).

“**Tabitha—Dorcas.** The latter word being the Greek equivalent of the former, which is Aramaic, and meaning *gazelle*, which in the East was a favorite type of beauty. It was customary at this time for the Jews to have two names, one Hebrew and the other Greek or Latin; and this would especially be the case in a seaport like Joppa, which was both a Gentile and a Jewish town. She may have been known by both names” (Vincent 1.496).

“Tabitha was distinguished for good works. *And almsdeeds.* Acts of kindness to the poor” (Barnes 443).

“Possibly Luke thought she best exemplified what a female disciple of Jesus should be like, for we are told that she was literally ‘full of good works’” (Anchor Bible Dictionary).

“The double meaning of Tabitha, her Aramaic name, and the summary of her personal profile indicate her substantial reputation in the church.” (The New Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. 10. 161).

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died:

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

“Lydda was six miles from Joppa” (Barnes 443).

“Why they sent is not affirmed. It is probable that they desired his presence to comfort and sustain them in their affliction. It is certainly possible that they expected he would restore her to life; but as this is not mentioned—as the apostles had as yet raised up no one from the dead

—as even Stephen had not been restored to life—we have no authority for assuming, or supposing, that they had formed any such expectation” (Barnes 443).

“Having heard of Aeneas’s healing, they seem to have thought it merely a slight extension of divine power to raise the dead” (*EBC* 9.382).

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

“Possibly there as nurses and as professional mourners—a part they certainly played at a later date—but more probably simply as Dorcas’ beneficiaries” (*IB* 9.130).

“*and all the widows*. Whom Dorcas had benefited by her kindness. They had lost a benefactress; and it was natural that they should recall her kindness, and express their gratitude by enumerating the proofs of her beneficence. Each one would therefore naturally dwell on the kindness which had been shown to herself” (Barnes 443).

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

“Peter had been instrumental in a number of physical healings and even pronounced the death sentence on Ananias and Sapphira. Yet raising people from the dead was hardly a common feature of his ministry. Nevertheless, knowing himself to be an apostle of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit—and probably remembering his Lord’s raising of Jairus’s daughter, Peter responded to the urgent call. As he had seen Jesus do in the case of Jairus’s daughter, he ordered the mourners out of the room and prayed. Then he spoke these words: ‘Tabitha, get up’ (which in its Aramaic form *Tabitha kumi* would have differed in only one letter from Jesus’ command *Talitha kumi* (Little girl, get up). When she opened her eyes and sat up, he took her by the hand, helped her to her feet, and presented her alive to the Christians who stood by. It was an exceptional exhibit of God’s mercy and the Spirit’s power, and ‘many people believed in the Lord’ ” (*EBC* 9.382).

In the same manner as Jesus:

Mark 5:41, 42

41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

Out is *Exo* (1854) in Greek which means ‘put them without, out of the doors.’

Prayed in Greek (4336) is *proseuchomai* which means “to offer prayers, to pray earnestly form, to pray to God.”

Opened is *anoigo* (455) which means “to open, literally of a door or gate, metaphorically to open the mouth, beginning to speak, opening of the eyes or ears, to give entry to the soul, to give access to, to open the door.”

Eyes is *ophthalmos* (3788) which means “the eye, metaph. The eyes of the mind, the faculty of knowing, mental vision, the eyes of the heart or knowledge.”

Sat up is *anakathizo* (339) which means “to raise one’s self and sit upright, to sit up form the dead, erect”.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

“And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up—precisely as His Lord had done to his own mother-in-law (Mark 1:30)” (Jamieson 3.64).

“Though ‘saints’ is the all-inclusive word for ‘Christians,’ we need hardly suppose that the widows were not Christians” (*IB* 9.130).

“This miracle was not merely a work of benevolence in restoring to life one who contributed largely to the comfort of the poor, but it was used as a means of extending and establishing, as it was designed doubtless to do, the kingdom of the Saviour” (Barnes 443).

“The raising of Dorcas is notable because it is the first of such miracles by an apostle, and because it resulted in winning many believers. Luke probably found this narrative in the early traditions of the Palestinian church and reported it, believing such an event was both possible and probable—a confidence accepted and wondered at today” (*IDB* 1.865).

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.