
a ***Grace Notes*** course

ACTS 200

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study
by Warren Doud

Lesson 206: **Acts 9:32 to 43**

ACTS, Lesson 206, Acts 9:32-43

Contents

Acts 9:32-43	3
Acts 9:32.....	3
Acts 9:33.....	3
Acts 9:34.....	3
Acts 9:35.....	4
Acts 9:36.....	4
Acts 9:37.....	5
Acts 9:38.....	5
Acts 9:39.....	5
Acts 9:40.....	5
Acts 9:41.....	6
Acts 9:42.....	6
Acts 9:43.....	6
Lydda	6

Acts 9:32-43**Acts 9:32**

Acts 9:32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

Acts 9:32 ¶ Now it came about that as Peter was traveling through all those parts, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. [NASB]

Peter passed through all quarters

Peter was making a tour of the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. His ministry was to plant churches, visit existing churches, ordain pastors, preach the gospel, and teach Christian doctrine.

Lydda

Lydda is a town of the tribe of Ephraim, in the coastal plain of Israel, 10 miles southeast of Tel Aviv. It is first recorded in Thutmose III's list of towns of Canaan (1465 BC).

The Talmud says "the country of Judea is divided into three parts: the hill country, the plain, and the valley. The hill country was from Beth-horon to Emmaus; the plain was from Emmaus to Lydda; and the valley was from Lydda to the sea."¹

According to the Bible Lydda (Lod) was founded by Shemed, a Benjaminite (I Chronicles 8:12). In the Hellenistic period Lydda was outside the boundaries of Judea. In 145 BC. it was detached from Samaria and given by Demetrius II to Jonathan the Hasmonean.

In Maccabean times it was a purely Jewish town, and later Julius Caesar is reported to have restored the privileges of its Jews, taken away by the Greeks. In 43 AD Cassius, the governor of Syria, sold its inhabitants into slavery. The Roman proconsul of Syria, Cestius Gallus, burned Lydda on his way to Jerusalem in 66 AD. Captured by John the Essene at the beginning of the first Jewish war (66--70), it was occupied by Vespasian in 68 AD.

¹ Gill on Acts 9:32

Between the First and Second Jewish Wars the town flourished. It had a large market, raised cattle and ran textile, dyeing and pottery industries. It was a seat of the Sanhedrin, and its scholars included Akiba and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. It also had a Christian community at the time of Peter (Acts 9:32-35). In the year 200 Septimus Severus, the Roman emperor, established a Roman city there. Still partly Jewish, it took part in the revolt against the emperor Gallus in 351 and was punished when this failed.

The Christians in Lydda may have heard the Gospel from Philip. Recall from 8:40 that he passed from Azotus to Caesarea, and Lydda was on that road.

Acts 9:33

Acts 9:33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

Acts 9:33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. [NASB]

The name Aeneas is an old Greek name; Aeneas the Trojan was the subject of Vergil's Aeneid. Aeneas might have been a Hellenistic Jew, or he could have actually been a Gentile. He was apparently a Christian disciple already, since Peter is said, in verse 32, to be visiting the "saints". He had been confined to his bed for eight years.

Sick of the palsy is **paraluw** in the perf. pass. participle, "was paralyzed".

Acts 9:34

Acts 9:34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole: arise, and make your bed. And he arose immediately.

Acts 9:34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise, and make your bed." And immediately he arose. [NASB]

Jesus Christ makes you whole

"Jesus Christ **heals** you.", pres. mid. ind. of **ijomai** "to heal".

arise, make your bed. And he arose immediately

In this case Peter did not help Aeneas arise, but he got up under his own power. Since he was at home, Aeneas did not have to pick up his bed and walk; he spread his bed for himself, something that others had done for him for many years. This was a full demonstration that he was perfectly whole.² Compare Acts 3:16, where, when the Lord healed the man, Peter actually lifted him up from the ground.

Acts 9:35

Acts 9:35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Acts 9:35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. [NASB]

Once again we observe that many people were witnesses to a divine healing and were led to consider the claims of Christ because of the miracle, just as was the case in the Temple (Acts 3).

Saron

The region in which the town of Lydda is located. It was the area of plains that lay between Joppa and Lydda.

The word “Sharon” (sometimes spelled Saron) means a level place or plain. The Bible uses the term to describe one of the largest valley plains in all of Palestine. The term is found in numerous verses, including Acts 9:35, 1 Chronicles 5:16, and 1 Chronicles 27:29. If you were to examine a map of Palestine, you could locate this valley by finding the city of Joppa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Joppa, and the Aijalon section to its southwest, were the approximate southern borders of the valley. It extended west from the Mediterranean Sea for about 10-15 miles, and north for about 30 miles. Topographical maps distinctly show this region to be a low valley bordered by higher mountains.

From all indications, the Sharon valley was a wild, fertile plain that was the home to a host of beautiful flowers. Isaiah 35:2 lists Sharon in a

² Gill on Acts 9:34

context discussing blooming vegetation, and describes the valley as “excellent” (NKJV). Sharon was renowned for its majesty and beauty.

Acts 9:36

Acts 9:36 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.

Acts 9:36 ¶ Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did. [NASB]

Joppa

“This was a seaport town situated on the Mediterranean, in the tribe of Dan, about 30 miles south of Caesarea, and 45 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was probably the same town that was called Japho in the Old Testament (Joshua 19:46) which belonged to the tribe of Dan.

Joppa was the principal seaport of Palestine; and hence, though the harbor was poor, it had considerable celebrity. It was occupied by Solomon to receive the timber brought for the building of the temple from Tyre (2 Chronicles 2:16), and was used for a similar purpose in the time of Ezra, Ezra 3:7. The present name of the town is Jaffa. It is situated on a promontory jutting out into the sea, rising to the height of about 150 feet above its level, and offering on all sides picturesque and varied prospects.”³

Tabitha – Dorcas

Tabitha is a Hebrew, or more probably, Syriac, name which means “gazelle” or “antelope” or “roe”. The Greek name is **dorka~**, with the same meaning. It was customary to give girl babies the names of beautiful animals, and comparing a woman’s beautiful eyes to those of an antelope (or **roe**) is common in the writings of Arabian and Persian poets, as well as being found in Song of Solomon 2:9,17; 4:5; 7:3.

³ Barnes, Acts 9:36

Dorcas was a Christian woman who spent her life performing deeds of kindness and charity, as a service for the Lord to others.

Acts 9:37

Acts 9:37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber.

Acts 9:37 And it came about at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. [NASB]

In those days refers to the time Peter was ministering in Lydda, which was six or eight miles from Joppa. Dorcas became very ill with some disorder and died of it. That she was really dead, and not just in a faint, is proved by the fact that the people had to deal with her body in the customary way, by washing the corpse and laying it in an upper room in preparation for burial.

Acts 9:38

Acts 9:38 And because Lydda was near 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.

Acts 9:38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him, "Do not delay to come to us." [NASB]

Peter, the two men, and anyone who came along with Peter from Lydda to Joppa, would have had only a three or four-hour walk to get to Joppa.

There is nothing to show why the people of Joppa sent for Peter. There is no evidence that they expected him to heal Dorcas, although it's possible that they had heard of Aeneas's healing and wondered if Peter could help. But as yet, the apostles had not raised anyone from the dead, so it's not likely they would have expected that. However, it was very much a part of Peter's ministry to comfort people who were in distress; and here a whole community of people loved and

appreciated Dorcas, so it was natural for him to want to serve them as a comforter.

Acts 9:39

Acts 9:39 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 showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

Acts 9:39 And Peter arose and went with them. And when he had come, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. [NASB]

The widows mentioned here would likely have been some of the key benefactors of Dorcas' generous ministry while she lived. The coats and garments she made for the poor were given as gifts of love to those who were the most needy. In fact, in some Bible versions, notably the Latin Vulgate, the Arabic, and the Ethiopian, state "showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made *for them*, while she was alive". The widows were extremely grieved to lose such a close friend, and they wept as they recalled her kindness and grace-filled life.

Acts 9:40

Acts 9:40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

Acts 9:40 But Peter sent 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. [NASB }

Peter wanted to pray without distraction. During his prayer he must have received assurance from God that she would be raised from the dead at his word. Recall from Luke 8:54, where the Lord Jesus "put them all outside" when He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.

When Peter spoke, God brought Dorcas to life, and she sat up on the bed where she had been lying.

Acts 9:41

Acts 9:41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

Acts 9:41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. [NASB]

Peter lifted her up, off the bed or board where she had been lying. It seems that Peter then called all the people back into the room, rather than going outside with Dorcas at that time, in order to show them that she was alive. It was a great joy and blessing to all of the believers to see such a great miracle performed.

Acts 9:42

Acts 9:42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

Acts 9:42 And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. [NASB]

A town like Joppa would have been an extended community, with people living in the countryside and in small hamlets and enclaves round about, which may also have gone by the name Joppa. The news of the miracle spread rapidly and brought many people to Christ as they heard the Gospel preached.

Acts 9:43

Acts 9:43 And he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

Acts 9:43 And it came about that he stayed many days in Joppa with a certain tanner, Simon. [NASB]

So, Peter stayed in Joppa for quite a while and spent his time in Christian fellowship, preaching, baptizing new believers, and teaching Christian life principles.

It's interesting that he stayed with a man who was a tanner. The Jews considered the occupation of tanner to be unclean, and avoided those who

worked as tanners, because the tanner was continually in contact with dead animals and their skins. One of the rabbis said "It is impossible for the world to do without tanners, but woe to him who is a tanner."⁴ A Jewish woman was allowed to sue for divorce if her husband became a tanner.

It is also remarkable that Peter, who shows himself so grace filled and non-legalistic here, should in a very short time, on the roof of Simon the Tanner's home, have scruples about eating food considered unclean.

Furneaux says, "The lodging with the tanner was a step on the road to eating with a Gentile."

Lydda

A town in the coastal plain of Israel, 10 miles southeast of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, is first recorded in Thutmose III's list of towns of Canaan (1465 BC).

According to the Bible it was founded by Shemed, a Benjaminite (I Chronicles 8:12). In the Hellenistic period Lydda was outside the boundaries of Judea. In 145 BC. it was detached from Samaria and given by Demetrius II to Jonathan the Hasmonean.

In Maccabean times it was a purely Jewish town, and later Julius Caesar is reported to have restored the privileges of its Jews, taken away by the Greeks. In 43 AD Cassius, the governor of Syria, sold its inhabitants into slavery. The Roman proconsul of Syria, Cestius Gallus, burned Lydda on his way to Jerusalem in 66 AD. Captured by John the Essene at the beginning of the first Jewish war (66--70), it was occupied by Vespasian in 68 AD.

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⁴ Robertson, Acts 9:43

against the emperor Gallus in 351 and was punished when this failed.

By the Byzantine era, the town was predominantly Christian. It was the legendary birthplace of St. George, patron saint of England, and was called Georgiopolis.. The Crusaders occupied the town in 1099; there was only one Jewish family there in 1170, according to Benjamin of Tudela. But more Jews settled there again after the conquest by Saladin. During the early Ottoman period there seem to have been no Jews living there, though a small Jewish community was founded in the 19th century. The Jews were forced out by the 1921 Arab riots; by 1944 Lydda had a population of 17,000 Arabs, one-fifth of them Christian. During the War of Independence, Israel forces occupied Lydda in July 1949. The majority of Arabs abandoned the town. At the end of 1990 the population numbered 43,000 including over 4,000 Muslims and Christian Arabs.

Israel's international airport, renamed in honor of David Ben-Gurion, was originally built on the outskirts of Lydda by the British Mandatory government in 1936. It is the home base for Israel's El Al airlines. Almost three million passengers passed through it in 1991. Both the airport and Israel Aircraft Industries are important sources of employment for the local population. Other industries include papermaking, food preserves, electrical appliances, cigarettes and oil refining.

from the Catholic Encyclopedia

A titular see of Palestina Prima in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The town was formerly called Lod, and was founded by Samad of the tribe of Benjamin (I Par., viii, 12).

Some of its inhabitants were taken in captivity to Babylon, and some of them returned later (I Esdras., ii, 33; II Esdras., vii, 37; xi, 34). About the middle of the second century B.C., the city was given by the kings of Syria to the Maccabees, who held it until the coming of Pompey to Judea (I Mach., xi, 34, 57; Josephus, "Antiquities", XIV, x, 6).

Julius Caesar in 48 B.C. gave Lydda to the Jews, but Cassius in 44 sold the inhabitants, who two

years later were set at liberty by Antony (Josephus, "Jewish War", I, xi, 2; "Antiquities", XIV xii, 2-5). The city also experienced civil wars and the revolt of the Jews against the Romans in the first century of our era; it was then officially called Diospolis, but the popular name always remained Lod or Lydda.

There were Christians in this locality from the first, and St. Peter, having come to visit them, there cured the paralytic Aeneas (Acts, ix, 32-5).

The earliest known bishop is Aetius, a friend of Arius; the episcopal title of Lydda has existed since that time in the Creek Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In December, 415, a council was held here which absolved the heretic Pelagius, at the same time condemning his errors. Lydda has been surnamed Georgiopolis in honour of the martyr St. George, who is said to have been a native of this town.

The pilgrim Theodosius is the first to mention (about 530) the tomb of the martyr. A magnificent church erected above this tomb, was rebuilt by the Crusaders, and partly restored in modern times by the Greeks, to whom the sanctuary belongs. On the arrival of the Crusaders in 1099 Lydda became the seat of a Latin see, many of whose titulars are known. At present the city contains 6800 inhabitants, of whom 4800 are Moslems, 2000 schismatic Greeks and a few Protestants. The Catholics have a parish of 250 faithful in the neighboring town of Ramléh.