

Restored to Life

Acts 9:32–43

By Scott Huckaby

8/28/2022

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

A couple Sunday's ago, Ben shared with us Luke's account of the new Christians in Jerusalem scattering due to persecution which gave them opportunities to share the gospel in Judea, Samaria, and beyond. Probably the chief persecutor of Christians was Saul and Casey shared with us last week of his conversion to Christianity following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Today, we are going to take a look at one of the missionary road trips of Peter.

And during this missionary road trip, Peter healed a paralyzed man and raised a dead woman to life. When I learned that I'd have an opportunity to share a message and saw what was up next in Acts, I started looking forward sharing this message because raising someone from the dead points to the resurrection of Jesus, a topic that I love to talk about and is central to our faith.

I'll start by reading Acts 9:32-35 which says: *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. ³³ There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. ³⁵ So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.*

Notice that, *Peter went through all parts of the country*: The previous pattern of the apostles staying put in Jerusalem and those needing ministry coming from afar to them (as reflected in Acts 5:16) now shifted. Peter went through all parts of the country to do ministry, traveling the 35 miles from Jerusalem to Lydda. Lydda is near Ben Gurion Airport outside of Tel Aviv.

As Peter was out ministering in the name of Jesus, he found in Lydda a man who God wanted to miraculously heal which gave Peter an opportunity to share the gospel. There is a principle here: The more we can be like Peter, who shared the gospel wherever he went, the more we will also see the miraculous power of God.

Aeneas had been paralyzed and thus bedridden for 8 years. He was healed when Peter said to him, "*Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you.*" Peter clearly identified who healed him – Jesus the Christ. Peter was only the Lord's instrument. Peter saying, "*Arise and make your bed,*" was probably a deliberate imitation of what Jesus said when He healed a paralytic man in Mark 2:10-12.

What do you think happened as a result of Peter being God's instrument to heal Aeneas?

All who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord: The miraculous healing of Aeneas resulted in many people turning to the Lord which was no doubt due to Peter having an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

There is another principle here that we can apply: miracles give opportunities to share the gospel. But God is not using these kinds of miracles today because the Bible is complete... there are no Scripture-writing apostles that need to be authenticated today.

So, what miracle have you seen that can be used to get someone's attention?

God is still healing people, not to authenticate an apostle but in response to prayer. Now, someone could rationalize that today's healings are due to human technology not recognizing from Whom we've received our technological blessings. But I am aware of several healings that cannot be attributed to medical technology... they were obviously miracles.

Another miracle that every follower of Christ has witnessed is their own being born again. While few conversions were as spectacular as that of Saul, they were nonetheless miracles. I love to tell the story of my own conversion. God used Bible prophecy to show me that His Word explained how the Cold War could end so suddenly without a shot being fired. And if the Bible could make sense of such perplexing current events, it had to also be right about my need for having a personal relationship with the Savior Jesus Christ.

Your own conversion testimony can be used as the miracle that gets the attention of others thus giving you an opportunity to share the gospel. So, it is a good idea to be ready with a short, succinct version of how you came to recognize Jesus as your Savior and look for opportunities to work it into a conversation.

All right, let's move on to another attention-grabbing miracle Peter used to help more people know the Lord. Verses 36-43 says: ³⁶ *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.* ³⁷ *But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.* ³⁸ *And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them.* ³⁹ *Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.* ⁴⁰ *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.* ⁴¹ *Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.* ⁴² *And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.* ⁴³ *So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.*

Peter went to the town of Joppa when a couple of Christ-followers begged him to because a highly respected resident there had died. The Christians in Joppa had heard that God was doing miraculous things through Peter in nearby Lydda.

The dead woman was named *Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas*, both the names mean "deer." She must have been the first Lady-Buck. Dorcas was the Greek form of the Aramaic name Tabitha. [When I took French in high school, all the students were given French names. Since there was no French equivalent for "Scott," the teacher called me "Simon." Maybe that's why I find it easy to identify with Peter.]

Tabitha was a beloved member of the Christian community in Joppa, because she was *full of good works and charitable deeds*. The two Christ-followers must have urged Peter to come quickly because the friends of Tabitha were pretty upset over her loss.

There is no indication in the Book of Acts that it was common or popularly expected that dead Christians could be resuscitated to life again. This miracle is included in Scripture just because it was unusual and remarkable. The two Christ-followers who brought Peter to Joppa probably thought that if it was too late for Tabitha's healing then maybe Peter could at least help the Christian community work through their grief.

The Joppa Christians expected Peter to merely comfort those who *stood by him weeping* in their grief over Tabitha's death. Yet Peter must have sensed a specific leading to do just as he had seen Jesus do when another group of people were weeping over the death of a 12-year-old daughter of a synagogue ruler which was recorded in Mark 5:38-43 and Luke 8:40-56.

So, Peter had all the mourners leave the room, prayed, and said, *Tabitha, arise*: Peter seemed to clearly remember what Jesus said at that time, "*Talitha, cumi,*" which is translated, "*Little girl, I say to you, arise.*" Peter would have said in the original language, "Tabitha cumi."

Peter simply followed the example of Jesus who was his leader. He wasn't trying to lead Jesus anymore, as he did when he told Jesus not to go the way of the cross in Matthew 16:22. Now Peter was letting Jesus lead him.

Tabitha opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up: By all appearances, Tabitha was raised from the dead. She was dead and came back to life. That was a remarkable, unusual miracle. But then again, all miracles are by definition unusual and thus remarkable.

We should remind ourselves that Tabitha was not resurrected; she was resuscitated to her old, mortal life, and thus would die again.

The fact that the Lord raised Tabitha, yet Stephen (and later, James in Acts 12:2) remained dead, reflects on God's unsearchable ways. After all, it certainly seemed that Stephen and James were more important to the church than Tabitha. Yet we must always trust God's greater wisdom in such things.

Tabitha wasn't raised for her own sake. She would have enjoyed heaven much better! She was raised for the sake of her ministry to others, which is the same reason we too have passed from *death into life* (John 5:24).

After Tabitha opened her eyes and sat up, Peter called in *the saints and widows*: Acts 9:32 and 41 both mention the saints in Lydda and Joppa. This is the first time Christians are called saints in Acts. When the Bible calls Christians saints, the idea isn't of a super-perfect people; it is of a people who are different. Saints are set apart from the world at large; they are distinctive. Our church gatherings are an assembly of saints. **Isn't it great to be with your fellow saints?**

What did this miracle of Tabitha being raised from the dead result in per verse 42?

The miracle *became known throughout all Joppa and many believed on the Lord*.

Peter ended up staying several days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner, and no-doubt had the opportunity to share the gospel with many people.

The idea that Peter stayed with a tanner who produced animal hides would be shocking to an observant Jew of that time. According to their interpretation of the Law, it was forbidden to associate with anyone who routinely worked with dead animals.

- The Jewish laws of the time required a tanner to live at least 75 feet outside a village because of his constant ritual uncleanness.

Because Peter spent several days in Joppa with the tanner Simon, we see him becoming less concerned about Jewish traditions and embellishments of the Law than before. This work of God in Peter's heart laid groundwork for the next stage of his enlightenment which we'll see in the following chapter.

Who else comes to mind that was raised from the dead? Jesus; of course, He was the most prominent because He was the first, and so-far, only one to be raised from the dead into a permanent, glorified body that would never die. His body is the kind we look forward to having when we're resurrected; that is our blessed hope. Speaking of Jesus, 1 John 3:2 says, "*we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*"

I'll have more to say about the resurrection of everyone into permanent bodies that will never die but **who else do we know from the Bible besides Tabitha who was raised from the dead?**

Lazarus of Bethany (John 11). Lazarus was actually the third person Jesus raised from the dead. But Lazarus was the most prominent because it was this miracle that sealed Jesus' fate with the Pharisees and other Jewish rulers. "*From that day on they plotted to take his life.*" The Jewish leaders also conspired to take the life of Lazarus: "*for on account of him, many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him*" (John 12:10–11).

The first person Jesus raised from the dead was a widow's son (Luke 7:11–17). As the Lord approached the town of Nain, He met a funeral procession. In the coffin was a young man, the only son of a widow. When Jesus saw the procession, "*his heart went out to [the woman] and he said, 'Don't cry'*". Jesus touched the coffin and spoke to the dead man saying, "*young man, I say to you, get up!*" And immediately "*the dead man sat up and began to talk*". The Bible doesn't say what he talked about so we can only imagine.

Also, as mentioned previously, Jesus showed His power over death by raising the young daughter of Jairus, a synagogue leader which is probably what inspired Peter regarding Tabitha.

The Bible also mentions that some people were raised from the dead en-masse when Jesus died on the cross per Matthew 27:50–53. When Jesus died, "*the earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open.*" At that time, "*the bodies of many holy people . . . were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.*" These saints who were raised from the dead became witnesses of the life that only Jesus can give.

Peter wasn't the only apostle to raise someone from the dead. Acts 20:7–12 gives the account of Paul speaking to believers in Troas who were gathered in a third-story upper room. Since Paul was leaving town the next day, he spoke late into the night. One of his audience members was Eutychus, who fell asleep while sitting in a window causing him to fall to his death. Paul went down and "*threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him.*" Eutychus came back to life, went upstairs, and ate a meal with the others and everyone who witnessed the miracle was "*greatly comforted.*"

How about in the Old Testament, are there any examples of people being raised from the dead prior to Jesus' coming?

Elijah the prophet raised the widow of Zarephath's son from the dead (1 Kings 17:17–24). Elijah was staying the widow's house during a severe drought. While he was there, the widow's son became ill and died. In her grief, the woman thought Elijah's presence had brought about the death of her boy as a judgment on her past sin. Elijah took the dead boy from her arms, went to his room, and prayed, *"Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!"* Elijah stretched himself out on the boy three times as he prayed, *"and the boy's life returned to him."* The prophet brought the boy to his mother, who said: *"Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."*

Elijah's successor, the prophet Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son from the dead (2 Kings 4:18–37). Elisha regularly stayed in Shunem with a particular family there. One day, while Elisha was at Mount Carmel, the couple's young son died. The woman carried the body of her son to Elisha's room and laid it on his bed and went to find the prophet. As soon as Elisha and the Shunammite woman arrived back home, Elisha went to his room, shut the door, and prayed. Then he stretched out on top of the boy's body, and the body began to warm. Elisha arose, walked about the room, and stretched himself out on the body again. The boy then sneezed seven times and awoke from death. Elisha then delivered the boy, alive again, to his grateful mother.

2 Kings 13:20–21 gives the account of Elisha being connected with another miracle that occurred after his death. Sometime after Elisha had died and was buried, some men were burying another body in the same area. The grave diggers saw a band of Moabite raiders approaching, and, in their haste to leave the area, threw the man's body into Elisha's grave. Scripture records that, *"when the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet."*

I always wonder what these people had to say about their experience while they were dead. There have been people in our day who've been resuscitated after being technically dead, not breathing and with no heartbeat. Some of these have related amazing things which may have been their oxygen-deprived brain playing tricks on them or made-up so that they could sell books.

The Apostle Paul describes a time when he was caught up to heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2–4. Speaking of himself in the third person: *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."*

Of course, there have been many who've been resuscitated from being clinically dead who don't remember anything. That forgetfulness may be the grace of God if they were not followers of Jesus.

All these miracles of people being raised from the dead are a testimony to the immortal power of God. Only He has the power of life and death... 1 Samuel 2:6 – *The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.*

Everyone who rose from the dead except for Jesus were raised in their mortal bodies and would die again. But they all reveal the power of God and point to the ultimate rising from the dead into an immortal body that would never die as Jesus demonstrated.

1 Corinthians 15 tells us the resurrection of Jesus has given us a reason to tell others about Him and place trust in Him (1 Corinthians 15:14). His resurrection has given us assurance that our sins are forgiven (1 Corinthians 15:17). And, His resurrection has given us a reason to have hope today (1 Corinthians 15:20–28). If Christ was not raised from the dead, then Christians would be no better off spiritually than non-Christians.

So, when will we receive our permanent, glorified, resurrected bodies that will never die?

At the Rapture of the Church... I'll have more to say about that shortly. The Bible reveals that there will be multiple resurrections... Jesus said in John 5:28–29, *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*

Thus, there will be two resurrections in type but the resurrection of the righteous occurs in stages...

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 – *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.*

Referring to the resurrection of Jesus as the firstfruits invokes a harvest imagery that was well understood in the agrarian society of the time.

In Bible times the harvest was conducted in three stages. It began with the gathering of the first fruits which were offered as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. The first fruits was followed by the general harvest. But not all was taken in this harvest. Some of the crop was left in the field to be gathered by the poor and the needy. This was called the gleanings (Leviticus 19:9-10).

Using this imagery, the Bible presents the resurrection of Jesus as the “first fruits” of the resurrection of the righteous. The gathering of the Church Age saints, living and dead, at the appearing of the Lord, also known as the Rapture of the Church, is thus the general harvest stage of the resurrection of the righteous (John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The gleanings of the harvest will be the Tribulation martyrs and Old Testament saints during the 70th week of Daniel.

The last group to receive permanent, glorified resurrected bodies are the Millennial Kingdom saints. The followers of Christ will not die during the time Jesus rules on earth despite having mortal bodies (Isaiah 65:17-25). But they will need glorified bodies for the Eternal State which they will be given when God makes the new heavens and earth; as Revelation 21:5 says, *Behold, I make all things new.*

The second type of resurrection which is called, “*the resurrection of the unjust*” in Acts 24:15, will take place all at one time at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus just prior to the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Every person who never related to God in faith will be resurrected at this time, regardless of when they lived, either before or after the Cross.

Everyone who goes before the Great White Throne will be judged on the basis of their works and thus will be condemned to the lake of fire because no one can meet God's standard of perfection... Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*”

But the good news is that all who've trusted in God's provision for eternal life, Jesus Christ, have been saved by His righteousness. On the cross, Jesus took our sin upon Himself and purchased our salvation. We have “*been justified by his blood*” per Romans 5:9, which means our sins have been forgiven. Paul puts it this way: “*For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Alright, it's time for us summarize...

What observations have you made from this missionary trip of Peter to Lydda and Joppa?

My take-aways are:

- We can use our miracle stories to get the attention of people which may give us an opportunity to share the gospel with them if they are responding to the Holy Spirit.
- Also, there is plenty of evidence that the Bible is true, that there is life after death... the end of our mortal lives is not the end of our lives.
- And, the resurrection of Jesus proves that He is our Savior, and we can be certain of our spending eternity with Him by simply recognizing that His death on the cross paid the penalty for our sin.

Well, I hope you've gotten some insight to God's promise of life after death from this message today.

Let's pray...