

## Acts 8 Chapter Study

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Outline of Acts*

- I. The Church At Jerusalem      Chs. 1-7
  - II. Persecution & Peace          Chs. 8-12 ←
  - III. Launching Out                Chs. 13-28
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We ended last week with the martyrdom of Stephen, the Church's first martyr.

In 7:58 we read that following their verdict, the members of the Sanhedrin who stoned him laid their outer garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. He wasn't the hat-check boy; he was acting as the official authority condoning Stephen's execution.

We learn more about Saul in the opening verses of ch. 8 . . .

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### II. Persecution & Peace      Chs. 8-12

#### **A. Saul Leads the Persecution 8:1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. <sup>2</sup>And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.**

The burial of Stephen was a time of great lament, not just for the loss of a powerful, godly rising star, but for what his death harbingered.

*With his execution, official Judaism* had come out in *formal opposition* to the Church and notice had been served that believers were *fair game*.

Proving their concerns valid was that following Stephen's death, a young man named Saul received permission from the authorities to crack down on believers.

The persecution became so intense, thousands fled Jerusalem & went to other cities in the surrounding state of Judea, as well as the neighboring state of Samaria.

This would be like persecution in LA driving believers out of the city into San Diego, Santa Ana Riverside, & so on. But also to Phoenix, & Tempe in Arizona.

**<sup>3</sup>As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.**

Saul had authority to go right in to people's homes & arrest them for nothing more than being followers of Jesus.

If they refused to recant & renounce their allegiance to the new movement, they were tossed into prison, until they did.

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Who was this Saul?

Saul was a Jew who'd been born & raised in his early years in the City of Tarsus in the province of Cilicia. Acts 21:39 22:3

Tarsus had a large & prosperous Jewish population, having become a central

part of their trade & banking industries.  
He was from the tribe of Benjamin, Romans 11:1 Philippians 3:5  
His parents must have been people of means because he was sent at an early age to study at the feet of Israel's foremost rabbi at that time – Gamaliel. Acts 22:3  
He was a Pharisee and appears to have excelled in both his studies & in his devotion to the strict lifestyle of the Pharisees. Acts 23:6 26:4-5 Galatians 1:13-14 Phil 3:6  
It's possible Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin.  
In Acts 7:58 he's the one who presided at Stephen's execution.  
And in Acts 26:10 he says when the Council voted against the Christians, he voted with the condemnation.  
If he wasn't a full-fledged member of the Sanhedrin, he was one of their main assistants.

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[2 Maps]

### **B. Revival in Samaria 8:4-25**

#### **1. Led by Philip 8:4-8**

#### **2. Simon's false conversion 8:9-24**

[Covered Sunday.]

#### **3. Revival widens 8:25**

**<sup>25</sup>So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.**

Once Peter & John made sure the Church was well grounded in the city of Samaria, they made their way south toward Jerusalem. No doubt Philip went with them.

They were in no hurry though. They stopped off in the villages & towns along the way & preached the Gospel.

They now well understood Salvation was for the Samaritans too.

I wonder if they went back to Sychar, that village they'd visited a few years before with Jesus where He'd encountered a woman at a well and shared the Good news with her.

What a joy it must have been for them to find her and tell her all that had happened to Jesus.

### **C. Conversion of an Ethiopian Official 8:26-40**

**<sup>26</sup>Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.**

Philip had already proven himself faithful in going to Samaria, so God now sends him word to head south.

But this is a strange command. The region of Gaza was a desert wilderness. It was desolate & barren.

The road from Jerusalem to Gaza was no major highway; it was a little used track.

To get an idea of how unusual this direction was, imagine Billy Graham in 1949 at

the height of the LA crusades.

One morning during his devotions, an angel appears to him & tells him to hike out of LA & head out to the Pearblossom Highway by Lancaster.

As strange as the command was, Philip knew better than to argue with an angel.

**27 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,**

**28 was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.**

Let me return to my analogy of Billy Graham.

So there he is, hot & sweaty from having hiked from LA out to the Pearblossom Highway and he's walking along among the Joshua trees, when off in the distance he sees a black limousine rising up & down on that bumpy road.

As it gets nearer he realizes it's 4 limousines, and on the front fenders of all 4 is a little US flag flapping in the breeze.

As the convoy reaches him it slows and a back power window buzzes down to reveal the Secretary of State reading a Bible.

That's what happened here.

Ethiopia was a fairly powerful & prosperous kingdom at that time.

It's king was a young boy considered to be the child of the Sun-god, & far too holy to concern himself with earthly affairs. So **Candace**, the title of the Queen Mother, ruled in his stead.

Her **chief of finance** was equivalent to our **Secretary of State**.

He was the one responsible for the economic well-being of the Kingdom.

He's the one who made trade alliances & oversaw the collection of tariffs & taxes.

His was a powerful position.

He's described here as a **eunuch**. It's not certain if that means he'd been **emasculated** as was common in ancient Oriental kingdoms, or if the label 'eunuch' was simply a **title** used for **all royal officials**.

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This great man had come into contact with Judaism in his native land & had heard in it the ring of truth.

He'd gone to Jerusalem, probably under cover of official business, but his **real** motive was to learn more about the God of Israel.

He'd worshipped the Lord while in Jerusalem & had acquired a copy of the scroll of Isaiah.

Only a very wealthy person could afford such a precious possession. He could certainly afford it.

But more likely the high priest had **given** him a copy as would befit his status as official representative of the Ethiopian Queen.

There would be no better single book of the Jewish scriptures to more fully teach

Him about Yahweh, and to prepare him to hear about the Messiah.

I wonder if he'd read Isaiah 56:3-8 . . .

**3 Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD speak, saying, "The LORD has utterly separated me from His**

people”; Nor let the eunuch say, “Here I am, a dry tree.” <sup>4</sup>For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, <sup>5</sup>Even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. <sup>6</sup>“Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants— Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant— <sup>7</sup>Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *will be* accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” <sup>8</sup>The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him *others* besides those who are gathered to him.”

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**<sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.” <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”**

It’s doubtful such an important official would have been traveling alone.

He’d have had a retinue of elite royal guards.

Approaching him would have been risky but the Spirit’s prompting was clear, so Philip complied.

Though the Ethiopian official was riding in a chariot, his guards were probably going by foot, so the pace would have been easy enough for Philip to equal. He moseyed up close enough to overhear the Ethiopian reading from the scroll. At that time, when reading something, you did so out loud, people rarely read silently.

They believed the words needed to be spoken & heard in order for them to bring the proper weight & understanding.

Philip heard the prophecy of Isaiah and asked if the man, who was obviously a foreigner, understood what he was reading.

Actually, Philip uses a play on words here - “Do you understand what you are reading?” in the Koine Greek they would have been speaking is – “Ginoskeis ha anaginoskeis?”

Roughly = “Do you get what you’re getting?”

It was a clever pun, a humorous play on words that would likely endear Philip to this official.

**<sup>31</sup>And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.**

The official admits that while he’s seeking after truth & found it in Judaism & it’s holy writings, he’s having a hard time getting at the heart of what Isaiah means. Philip’s question implied he had the skill to guide this man into an understanding of the text, so he invited Philip into his chariot.

Royal chariots were wide enough to accommodate up to 3 people; a driver and two passengers who either stood, holding onto the rail, or sat on small seats attached to the inner side of the chariot box.

**32**The place in the Scripture which he read was this: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. **33**In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.”

It “just so happened” that the portion of the scroll he’d been reading was ch. 53:7-8 which is prophetic of Christ.

**34**So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” **35**Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

Following the resurrection, Jesus had taught the Apostles how the OT scriptures spoke of Him & His mission.

The Apostles had then done a great job of instructing the new believers in these things.

Philip had been a good student and now rehearsed for this Ethiopian how all of Judaism found its culminus in Jesus.

**36**Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, *here is water*. What hinders me from being baptized?”

Philip had fully explained the Gospel to him, even showing what steps were needed to demonstrate faith.

But apparently he’d been reluctant to “close the deal.”

When they arrived at some water, the official said, “I wanna’ do it!”

**37**Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

**38**So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

There it was. The eunuch’s faith moved him to identify with Jesus, as genuine faith always does.

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The eunuch’s sense of urgency in being baptized & Philip’s endorsement of that desire points to something important for us to consider – every follower of Jesus needs to have a point in time when they make a *public profession* of faith in Christ.

Whether it’s an altar call, raising a hand, standing up, baptism, a time of public testimony, whatever; there needs to be a time, a moment when faith Christ was given public expression.

**39**Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. **40**But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

As soon as the baptism was accomplished, Philip disappeared.

V. 39 says the Spirit “caught him away;” the word comes from the same word we use for the Rapture – harpadzo >> It refers to a sudden, irresistible

snatching away.  
Philip didn't walk out of this pool, towel off, wave goodbye & stroll off into the sunset.  
He lifted the Ethiopian out of the water, & as soon as he was back on his feet, Phil disappeared!  
He reappeared some 20 miles away at the old Philistines city of Ashdod, now called Azotus.  
From there he hiked north to Caesarea on the coast another 50 miles, preaching all along the way.  
Philip settled down in Caesarea & raised a family.  
His 4 daughters grow up to become well known prophetesses.

[Map of Phil's travels]

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The early Church Father Irenaeus says that the Ethiopian eunuch returned home & became instrumental in establishing a vibrant, large Christian community there.

Okay – so far we've seen the Church planted in Jerusalem.

Persecution scattered it into Judea & Samaria; Jews & half-Jews.

The conversion of the Ethiopian official marks the first Gentile convert.

But he was a proselyte – a Gentile who'd become a convert to Judaism first.

What remains to be seen is a Gentile who comes to saving faith in Christ *without* first being a proselyte.

Before that happens, we learn about the conversion of the Church's greatest enemy.

#### **D. Conversion of Saul Ch. 9**

##### **1. A mission of extradition from Damascus 9:1-2**

**<sup>1</sup>Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.**

Damascus was the capital of the province of Syria & a huge city with a large Jewish population.

The Church had taken root there, and provided a haven for the Christian refugees fleeing Jerusalem from the persecution Saul led.

When he learned many had fled there, he went to the high priest and asked for official permission to go and extradite believers from there and bring them back to Jerusalem where they would either be forced into renouncing the new faith or thrown into prison.

The Romans had granted the Jewish high priest authority to pursue fleeing criminals & to draw up their own extradition orders which they required other of their provinces to honor.

That Saul received such extradition orders means he'd become the *defacto* Jewish agent of persecution against the followers of Jesus.

##### **2. Jesus confronts him 9:3-9**

**<sup>3</sup>As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. <sup>4</sup>Then he fell to the ground, and**



**heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”**

This was a divine visitation that reduced Saul to a weak mess.

His physical strength failed him and he fell to the ground.

It says **HE** heard the voice. In a later accounting of this, he says those with heard a sound but could not distinguish the words. [22:9]

But it was Jesus, who in great tenderness asked, “Why are you persecuting **ME**.”

There was no doubt who was speaking.

Paul knew this had to be God – and it was Jesus.

Imagine how crushing, how unnerving this moment of revelation had to be for poor Saul.

1) The Gospel was true.

2) Jesus was Messiah!

3) Jesus was God!

4) He, Saul, was guilty of opposing God – to the point of being willing to kill his servants!

And while God could have spoken with great anger & rage, He instead speaks with the utmost tenderness & mercy – “Saul, Saul!”

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Before we move on, I want to ask you to take a moment to consider the tenderness & compassion of God shown Saul at this point.

In human terms, Saul was the embodiment of evil, hate, false religion, hypocrisy.

Certain what he did was mistaken – he thought what he was doing was out of zeal for God, but in fact, it was the exact opposite.

OUTWARDLY – in all the human race, he seems the one MOST DESERVING of God’s wrath.

But he gets grace – amazing grace.

How sweet the sound of Jesus voice, to save a wretch like he, as he goes with letters in hand authorizing his brutality against the godly.

Evangelical Christianity in Modern America has taken on an angry & menacing visage.

It seems to represent a God Who’s angry & vengeful & just itching to smite those who mock faith or embrace immorality.

The ACLU & homosexual activists are made out to be modern day Sauls & God is seen as poised to squash them.

Before we add our voices to the religious hew & cry against them, let’s not forget Jesus’ tender, earnest appeal to Saul on the Road to Damascus.

God would rather convert the lost than smite them. Can we say the same, or are we like Jonah of old?

**<sup>5</sup>And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”**

He knew who it was, after all – he called him ‘Lord.’ But he had to make sure.

**Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”**

There’s a clue to what’d been going on within Saul but he’d admitted to no one.

He’d not even allowed *himself* to think about it for too long.

Deep inside, Saul had the nagging sense the Apostles were right and the Gospel

was true.

Everything he'd seen & heard among the followers of Jesus had struck him as right.

The grace with which Stephen had died had rocked him to the core.

How could error give a man such courage & joy in the face of death; it made no sense!

And Saul couldn't shake the feeling he was on the wrong side of things.

The harder he kicked against his conscience, the louder it spoke.

**6**So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

What next?

In that one question, we learn scads about our brother Saul.

He's a convert now. He believes. His faith isn't as full as it will be but it's enough to get him started.

And the *very first concern* he has is – *What do I do* with what I now believe?

For Saul, who will become the great Apostle Paul, who will fill out the Church's understanding of Salvation by Grace through Faith, faith means action, change, fruit = Doing!

**Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."**

Saul's first lesson is to learn to *wait on the Lord*.

**7**And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

Paul wasn't alone in being undone by the divine visitation.

Those with him were drained of strength & left mentally & emotionally stunned.

**8**Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. **9**And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

His companions had to lead him into Damascus because he was completely blind.

Blindness would be a great way to both reduce Saul's tendency to be doing something, and to remind him what had happened was no fluke – it was a real, divine encounter.

### 3. He's baptized 9:10-19

**10**Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "**Ananias.**" And he said, "Here I am, Lord." **11**So the Lord said to him, "**Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.** **12**And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Saul spent three days fasting & praying, during which God gave him a vision of what was to happen next.

The problem is, the man God wanted to go pray for Paul thought maybe the



Lord didn't know about Saul's rep.

**13**Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. **14**And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.”

“Are You sure, Lord? This Saul is a baaad dude!”

**15**But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. **16**For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.”

God told Ananias Saul had a great destiny as a proclaimer of the Gospel. And in doing so, he's suffer.

Ananias was then, all like, “Cool! Okay, I'll go.”

**17**And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Saul's blindness was to end when Ananias prayed for him.

It wasn't one of the Apostles who led Saul to Christ; it was just one of the believers in Damascus, not even Jerusalem.

God wanted the Apostle who more than any other would be responsible for the growth of the Church in the Gentile world, *not* to be led to faith in Jerusalem or by one of the original 12.

He wanted Saul *& all* to realize that salvation is sovereignly a work of the Spirit, done through the humble hands of His people – *regardless* of *who* or *where* they are.

**18**Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. **19**So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

Luke doesn't give any details on the nature of Saul's blindness but he does say that when his sight returned, something fell from his eyes – like fish scales. If you've ever cleaned a fish you know that scales are tiny transparent little flakes.

And once they fall to the ground, they pretty much disappear.

Saul's blindness & healing were both miracles.

God gave a physical manifestation to the recovery of his sight probably to designate that not only was Saul's physical blindness now being removed, but so was his spiritual blindness.

As the Apostle Paul Saul is going to have many serious run-in's with the spiritual blindness of the Jewish people.

It will lead to numerous arrests & beatings, & eventually it will take him to his own death in Rome.

He'll write about it in Romans.

#### **4. He preaches in Damascus 9:20-30**

**20**Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is

## the Son of God.

The very place he'd come to arrest Christians in is the place he now hopes to make *more of them* in.

**21**Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" **22**But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus is the Christ*.

Uh oh – this sounds an awful lot like someone else – Stephen!

And what happened to him when he trounced his opponents by proving Jesus was Messiah – they *offed* him. Careful Saul!

**23**Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. **24**But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. **25**Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket.

An inauspicious way for the man who'd originally come as official agent of the Jewish high council to leave town.

His suffering for the cause of Christ, however slight, has already begun.

**26**And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.

They thought Saul was simply using a clever ruse to find out who was a part of the movement..

**27**But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Barnabas' real name was *Joses* = short for 'Joseph.'

Barnabas was his *nickname* – Son of Encouragement.

People get nicknames like that because it's a defining trait.

Sometimes people get nicknames as a total joke – they're the exact opposite of what their name suggests.

But usually, a nickname equals a rep.

In ch. 4, Barnabas is mentioned as one of those wealthy men who'd sold land & given the proceeds to the needy.

Every time we see him, he's encouraging people, specially those who were lowly.

If you were tagged with a nickname by those who know you best, what would it be?

If it's less than attractive or desirable, it's not to late to *edit* your *rep*.

Barnabas went to bat for Saul. It was risky, but he knew Saul's conversion was legit and so he took on his case and sought to bring him to the Apostles for formal recognition.

**28**So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. **29**And

**he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.**

The same guys Stephen had debated. Saul got the same treatment as he.

**<sup>30</sup>When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.**

Saul became a hot commodity that the Jewish leadership realized posed a great danger.

When the plot to 86 him became concerted, the Church leaders knew they needed to send Saul home to Tarsus for a while. Caesarea was the nearest port.

## **E. A Season of Peace 9:31-43**

### **1. More growth 9:31**

**<sup>31</sup>Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.**

Saul's *boldness* had caused the heat of opposition to stay up.

With his departure, things cooled down & the Church was allowed to grow again.

### **2. Aeneas is healed 9:32-35**

**<sup>32</sup>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.**

Peter went on a pastoral tour of the local churches all over Israel.

Lydda was ancient Lod, a good sized city 25 NW of Jerusalem, at the intersection of the major highway N-S & E-W, Egypt to Syria & Joppa to Jerusalem.

The church at Lydda ended up becoming the scene of several important events in Church history.

**<sup>33</sup>There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. <sup>34</sup>And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. <sup>35</sup>So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.**

The Plain of Sharon is a vast plain that covers central Israel all the way from Joppa, north to Mt. Carmel.

There were hundreds of cities, towns, & villages with hundreds of thousands of people living in this area.

Like the lame man at the gate of the temple in ch. 3, Peter knew it was Aeneas time to be healed.

The miracle opened wide the door for the preaching of the Gospel.

### **3. Dorcas is raised 9:36-43**

**<sup>36</sup>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.**

Another 10 miles west of Lydda was the ancient & now virtually obsolete seaport of Joppa.

Among the disciples there was a woman named “Gazelle”; Hebrew = Tabitha, Greek = Dorcas.

This was a precious woman who fit her name well for she was incredibly gracious.

**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.

Jewish burial customs were to bury the body immediately, ASAP.

So the errand to fetch Peter had to be quick.

It's *possible* they left to fetch him BEFORE Tabitha died.

**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.

These widows were some of the poor & needy that had been the focus of Tabitha's special attention.

**40** But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed.

It's been some time since Jesus ascended, months, maybe even a few years.

Peter's seen lots and lots of miracles. The lame walk, the blind see.

But one of the signs Jesus said they'd perform they'd not seen yet was the dead raised back to life. [Mat 10:8]

So he prayed to search out the heart of God, determined now was the time to see that miracle performed, . . .

**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.

The ministry opps for Peter exploded with Tabitha's healing, so Peter stayed.

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What's interesting are his choice of digs.

Since tanners work all day with dead animals skins, they were *despised* in Jewish society.

That Peter would stay in the home of a man like Simon shows that his prejudices are weakening.

He's not over them; they will cause him trouble yet, but he's growing.

One of his major prejudices is about to be dealt a serious blow & it'll be difficult for him to overcome.

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We can all take comfort in that – that Peter wasn't perfect!

He was used powerfully by God, but he was far from perfect.

He held on to some pretty silly things. But God used him anyway.

We don't have to be perfect to be used by God, but we do have to be willing to be used and to step out in light of the faith we do have.