

Service

Tabitha (Dorcas)

Foundation

Bible passage : Acts 9:36-42

Although we might think there are a lot of examples of people being raised from the dead in the Bible there are only ten. (Not including the General Resurrection still to come.) Three in the Old Testament, five in the gospels and two in Acts, one involving Peter and one Paul.

Peter, as a key leader amongst the early Christians was travelling north along the coast meeting with Jewish Christians, teaching and preaching. So far, the disciples had done very little to spread the gospel to non-Jews but on this tour that would change.

Peter arrived at a city called Joppa, known today as Jaffa. Luke (the author of Acts) then takes us to a nearby city and an early Jewish Christian called Tabitha (an Aramaic name translated in Greek as Dorcas). She was “full of good works and acts of charity”. These were things encouraged by God in Old Testament, particularly the care of widows and orphans. They were therefore important to Jews and all the first Christians were Jews.

However, Tabitha was taken ill and died. As was the custom her body was washed, which would have been done by other women. It was then laid in an upper room, possibly to give the opportunity for others to gather and grieve, though in such a hot climate the body would be buried before the end of the day.

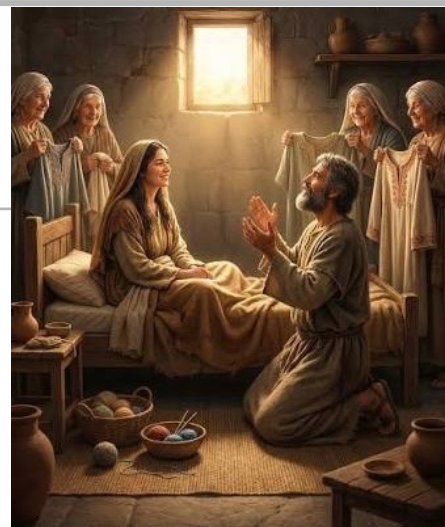
The mourners, who had heard that Peter was nearby, sent message to him in Lydda and he went “without delay”. What he did next seems to have

been learned from Jesus. He put the mourners out of the room, knelt in prayer and simply spoke “Tabitha, arise”.

The woman opened her eyes and sat up.

This was an amazing thing and underlines the truth of the message about Jesus that Peter, and later Paul, were passing on. However, our interest is in the example of Tabitha’s acts of service. In the face of death, the bereaved will usually want to speak about the good things the person had done. In this case when Peter arrived the widows present made a point of showing Peter the tunics and garments that Tabitha had made for them. Possibly things some were wearing. The care of widows was especially commended and commended by God in the Old Testament and there is more about this in Module 19.

Tabitha was using the talent she had as a way of serving those in need. There are lots of different ways in which we can serve other people, and we don’t know any more about what Tabitha did. But serving is about using the time, means and God given abilities we have for the benefit of others in ways that are good in the Lord’s sight.



“he was full of good works and acts of charity.” (v36)



Tabitha is an example of someone who used her time and abilities to serve those in need.