



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Acts 9:31-43 **English Standard Version** **February 18, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, February 18, 2018**, is from **Acts 9:31-43**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Acts 9:31) So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

One of the ways God brings peace to people is by leading their enemies to a true faith in Jesus Christ, which will include their repentance for their sins and a change in their behavior. The conversion of Saul illustrates this truth. The Church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace because no other religious leaders replaced Saul as a primary persecutor of Christians. The Bible teaches: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10 and Psalms 111:10). The fear of God sometimes motivates unbelievers as well as Christians to strive to obey God. The Holy Spirit will work upon unbelievers and help them come to believe in Jesus Christ and obey God. The Holy Spirit will work within Christians and enable them to obey God. The true fear of God includes true respect for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus will lead true believers to obey God the Father as their Almighty King, to fighting against their temptations to sin, to standing against the devil's schemes, to keep believing when persecuted, to a deeper understanding of the Scriptures, to teaching others about faith in Jesus

Christ and the consequences of judgment to come if people reject Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit encouraged the believers in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria to witness boldly as they preached about Jesus Christ; therefore, many new believers were led to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation and the New Testament Church continued to grow.

(Acts 9:32) Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

Peter began ministering outside of Jerusalem because the preaching of Philip and the sharing of the gospel by many of those who were scattered (because of their persecution in Jerusalem for their faith) had led to many believing in Jesus: “When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria” (Acts 8:14). Perhaps after reporting their findings in Jerusalem, Peter resumed his travels outside of Samaria and visited new churches throughout Judea. We do not know who founded the church in Lydda, presumably those scattered by persecution or those who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and returned to Lydda with the good news about Jesus the Messiah. Lydda was on the road from Jerusalem to Caesarea Philippi, about 10 or 12 miles southeast from Joppa.

(Acts 9:33) There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed.

Miraculous healings were not commonplace. Luke does not tell us whether Aeneas was a member of the church in Lydda or how Peter met him. Peter might have met him by the side of the road or he might have been one of “the Lord’s people who lived in Lydda.” The man was paralyzed by an accident or a disease; Luke does not say. But we can say with Jesus, “this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:3).

(Acts 9:34) And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.” And immediately he rose.

Guided by the loving power of Jesus, Peter told the man: “Jesus Christ heals you.” As another proof of the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, Peter told the man that Jesus (who was alive and with Peter, while also reigning from heaven) was healing him at that very moment. Peter also proved Jesus was alive and continuing to do His works when he healed the lame man at the temple in Jerusalem and told the crowd: “By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see” (Acts 3:16). Peter also demonstrated the truth of Jesus’ promise: “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). Peter did exactly what Jesus did when Jesus healed a paralyzed man and said to him, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home” (see Luke 5:18-26). Aeneas demonstrated his faith in the name of Jesus and the truthful words of Peter when he immediately obeyed and got up. Peter did not even need to take his hand or help him, as he had helped up the man Jesus healed at the temple in Jerusalem (see Acts 3:7).

(Acts 9:35) And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

Sharon may have been a town close to Lydda, both located in the fertile farmland called “the plains of Sharon,” which extended to Caesarea and included Joppa. The loving power that Jesus demonstrated through Peter led many to place their faith in Jesus, and the church in Lydda continued to grow spiritually and numerically. Peter’s miracle, his witnessing about Jesus, and the testimony of those in the church in Lydda convinced all who heard to repent and turn to faith in Jesus the Messiah.

(Acts 9:36) Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.

In the time of King David, Joppa was a major seaport of Israel by the Mediterranean Sea. The name Tabitha means “gazelle” or “antelope.” Tabitha was a Christian in the church in Joppa, whose founding may have been similar to the founding of the church in Lydda, which was about 12 miles away. Tabitha was active in the church and demonstrated her faith in Jesus by always doing good and helping the poor.

(Acts 9:37) In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.

Until Jesus Christ returns as He promised, Christians will get sick and die. When Tabitha became sick and died, she was not anointed for burial immediately; rather, her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Knowing how Jesus sometimes worked miracles through Peter and how Jesus had raised the dead, perhaps they hoped she could be healed or raised from the dead by Jesus if they sent for Peter. The Bible tells us the truth, but it does not tell us all we would like to know, or answer all our more detailed questions about events in the Bible. In his New Testament books, Luke wrote the essentials as the Holy Spirit directed him.

(Acts 9:38) Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, “Please come to us without delay.”

The good news about Peter ministering in Lydda and having healed a lame man there had spread to Joppa. Therefore, the church in Joppa sent two men and asked Peter to come with them at once to help Tabitha.

(Acts 9:39) So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.

James wrote, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself

from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27). Tabitha had demonstrated her pure and faultless faith by her actions and good deeds in behalf of the widows in Joppa. The widows Tabitha had cared for grieved and prayed over her body until Peter arrived. They gave Peter good and sufficient reasons to do whatever he could in Tabitha’s and their behalf. They showed him the clothes they were wearing that she had made for them.

(Acts 9:40) But Peter put them all outside, 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.

Led by the Holy Spirit, Peter imitated Jesus who healed and raised Jairus’ daughter (see Luke 8:40-56). Jesus had told the crowd, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.” Then, Jesus had sent everyone out of the room and took only Peter, John and James, and the child’s father and mother into the room with Him. In this situation, Luke was careful to say that Peter did not tell the widows that he would heal and raise Tabitha from the dead. Rather, after they left the room, Peter remembered how he had seen Jesus raise Jairus’ daughter; so, Peter humbly got down on his knees and prayed to Jesus. After learning from Jesus through prayer that it was the Lord’s will to raise her from the dead, Peter said to the dead woman, “Tabitha, get up,” and she opened her eyes and sat up. Jesus had said to Jairus’ daughter, “My child, get up.” In the Gospel of Mark, we learn this detail about Jesus’ healing of Jairus’ daughter: “Jesus took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha koum!’ (which means ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’)” (Mark 5:41). Interestingly, there is only one letter difference between “Talitha” and “Tabitha.”

(Acts 9:41) And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

Peter then took Tabitha by the hand and helped her up, as he had helped the lame man at the temple in Jerusalem. Peter then called for the church, and especially the widows that Tabitha had helped, and presented her to

them alive. We can only partially imagine the rejoicing of the church and the many praises to God offered by the widows over Tabitha's return to them. Tabitha could return "to always doing good and helping the poor," which was a good reason for Jesus to raise her from the dead and restore her to these needy widows.

(Acts 9:42) And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

In those days, the New Testament had not yet been written; so, the Holy Spirit used the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it spread by word of mouth and miracles of healing to demonstrate the loving power of the risen Jesus to save the lost from their sins and the enslaving power of devils (many of whom Jesus cast out during His ministry and through His disciples); therefore, many believed in the Lord.

(Acts 9:43) And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

The Holy Spirit led Peter to stay in Joppa where he could teach the church and the many new Christians more about the life and ministry of Jesus, the gift of eternal life, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (they had no Bible). He spoke to Jews who had become Christians, and by staying in Joppa, Peter would soon tell a Gentile, Cornelius, and his Gentile family and friends the good news about Jesus (see Acts 10). The gospel would soon spread around the world to Jews and others alike.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why was Peter able to heal the lame and raise the dead?
2. How did Tabitha show she her pure and faultless faith in Jesus? (see also, James 1:27)
3. What had Tabitha done for the widows in the church?

4. What did Peter do before he raised Tabitha from the dead? Why do you think he did this?
5. Why do you think Jesus raised Tabitha from the dead?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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