

1. The Apostles Stood in the Lineage of God’s Prophets
 - a. *εγενετο* - "It came to pass" - this is an extremely common introduction of narrative in the OT, particularly the prophetic narratives
 - b. Thus, Peter is being introduced here as a prophet-in-kind to the OT prophets, and this particular pericope as likened to the prophets of old - proclaiming the Word of God to the people of God, performing mighty deeds to verify the Word, though now this Word is centered upon Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of God
 - i. This motif of prophetic ministry is consistent with the Exodus/Promised Land motif of the previous story.
 - c. Peter “*went down to Lydda*”
 - i. Peter is hiking around to these churches in local towns of the region
 - ii. This shows us that the immediate provision of the Lord to His people is the local church
 1. This is particularly true in regards to sickness and death.
 2. The primary provision of the Lord’s love for the reality of sickness and death is not the healing done by Peter, but the love and inclusion and care of the local church
 - iii. Aeneas was included and Tabitha was deeply mourned by the local church
 1. This expression of love for the ill and for widows is the sign of a true church
 2. This is why Paul so often took up collections from wealthier churches to support poorer churches – the care of the local church is primary
 - d. This simple introduction also gives us an indication of the flow of the text and why these two stories are here in the whole narrative of Luke’s book
 - i. The gospel of Jesus the Christ is moving outward from Jerusalem to the “uttermost parts of the earth”
 - ii. It is moving as the Word of God travels, and all those who believe in Jesus, from Jew to Gentile, Man or Woman, Slave or Free, etc. are fully included in the people of God with full rights as equal heirs with the apostles
 1. Thus, Peter’s part in these two stories is not one of mere healer or miracle-worker, but one of “Includer” of all those who trust in Jesus.
 2. The Lyddians and the Joppans are full heirs of the Lord
 3. Soon, these Judeans will be joined by the full Gentile, Cornelius, in Caesarea through the vision and inclusion of Peter’s pronouncement there (Acts 10)
2. The Local Church is the Primary Means of God’s Kingdom Work
 - a. Lydda is the Hebrew Lud, a city near Sharon known for its fertile hills and cattle industry.
 - i. See Isaiah 66:19 for a prophecy of their proclamation of the glory of the Lord among the nations.
 - b. There were already saints dwelling in Lydda at this time. Philip's influence?
 - i. “*the saints*” is used three times in this chapter and not much else in the rest of the book
 - ii. Luke is emphasizing the holiness of *these local churches* throughout the region
 - c. In fact, one of the reason that I believe these single miracles happened at each of these towns was for the verification of the churches in Lydda and Joppa as true churches, expressions of the prophecy in Isaiah
 - i. Thus, it was necessary that Peter be there to do them as an apostle *to identify them as united with the whole Church*
 - ii. This is why any signs and wonders were evidences of *apostolic authority*, those sent directly by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit for such a work of church planting
3. Miracles Include a Person into God’s Work in the Local Church
 - a. While Peter was there, "he discovered a certain man there"
 - b. First, he didn't go to heal Aeneas, but he "found" him there
 - i. Peter’s original intention was not to find a paralyzed man, but rather to strengthen and encourage the church, like he did in Samaria
 - c. Aeneas is a Greek name with no Hebrew equivalent.

- i. This shows an increasing inclusion of the Gentiles into the Church
 - ii. God is up to what He had promised long ago through the prophets
 - 1. Psalm 86:9 – “All the nations which you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.”
- d. He was being paralyzed - too weak to stand
 - i. He had been lying down 8 years upon a pallet
 - 1. Consider how frustrating it is to be bedridden when you are ill
 - 2. Now, think about 8 years.
 - ii. 8 years meant that he had known what it was to be healthy, to walk, to work
 - 1. What was lost by him, he felt keenly
 - 2. It also means that he lost the ability to provide for himself and his family
 - 3. It also means that he lost the honor of being desired for marriage, and in an honor/shame culture, this would be devastating
 - iii. Note also that he was a member of the saints in Lydda
 - 1. His paralysis did not keep him from believing in the Lord
 - a. What faith this man had! He believed that one day, when Jesus returned, he would be made new...but not now.
 - b. This suffering, this waiting, did not keep him from entrusting himself to Christ Jesus
 - 2. It also shows that the primary concern for the Church of Jesus Christ is the love and care for one another when suffering
- e. Peter speaks to him by name
 - i. This is compassion
 - ii. Aeneas is not a case study, or a proof point for Peter – He is a man
- f. Peter announces that Jesus Christ is the objective and active one working.
 - i. Note that there is no mantra, no coat swinging, no dramatic flair or loud cries
 - 1. He simply states that Jesus the Christ (authority) heals you.
 - ii. This is apostolic healing – simple, direct, authority of Jesus
 - 1. There wasn't multiple attempts, multiple prayers, try and try again to “get it right”
 - 2. In fact, unlike the following story, prayer isn't even mentioned b/c Peter had already been given the authority to heal from Jesus (but not the authority over death, which he had to ask God for through prayer)
 - iii. Jesus gets the glory because Jesus is the one with the sovereign ability and power
 - 1. Peter didn't “unlock” anything – he simply announced what Jesus was doing
 - iv. Jesus is continuing His authoritative ministry beyond Judea
 - 1. Miracles are church-planting evidences of His authority
- g. Then Peter commands him to rise up (*αναστηθι*) and get himself dressed (literally, "furnish yourself")
 - i. This word “rise up” is the word used to describe the resurrection, and it is used 5 times in these few verse
 - 1. Luke is emphatic in describing the life which the living Lord Jesus is demonstrating through these signs and miracles
 - ii. Peter also tells Aeneas to “furnish yourself” once he gets up
 - 1. This is a restoration to the fullness of whole life
 - 2. Get up, get dressed! It's time for action, my friend.
 - 3. Back to work! Back to the community! Back to life!
 - iii. And He immediately "rises up"
 - 1. Immediately!
 - 2. Again, there are not stages of healing here, but complete restoration of paralyzed legs to complete wholeness
 - a. Apostolic miracles, those done by Jesus Christ Himself, are never questioned as to the fact of the healing
 - b. Their source is doubted by some, but not the fact that a man who hadn't walked in 8 years was walking around

4. The Purpose of Miracles is Ultimately Inclusion of Outsiders Through Repentance and Faith
 - a. *All those in Lydda and the plains of Sharon who saw him turned to the Lord*
 - b. The purpose of all healing miracles is repentance and entrusting the Lord
 - i. to turn is a good summary of a good response to the gospel
 1. "God sent Him to you [Jews] first to turn every one of you from your wickedness." (Acts 3:26)
 - ii. They turned away from other authorities of reality (repentance) and turned to entrust the Lord Jesus as their authority of what is good, right, true, virtuous, and real (faith)
 - iii. Thus, the result of this healing was repentance and faith – the true miracle
 1. Aeneas would die someday, his legs would become weak again
 2. But those who entrust themselves to Christ Jesus will live upon resurrection
 - c. they turned TO the Lord –
 - i. They did not turn to Peter, but to the Lord
 - ii. Thus, they did not all leave and go to Jerusalem to join Peter's church, but they entrusted themselves to the Lord in Lydda and remained there

5. The Kingdom of God Continues to Extend Throughout the Entire Earth
 - a. *In Joppa, there was existing a certain disciple named Tabitha, which being interpreted is pronounced Dorkas. She was being full of good works and charitable giving which she was doing.*
 - b. Joppa is a seaport on the western Philistine coast, modern day Jaffa.
 - i. It is the place from where Jonah fled the LORD to go to Tarshish.
 - ii. It is the place marked out as the northern-most boundary of the tribe of Dan, when Israel came into the Promised Land of Canaan.
 - iii. It is the seaport by which the cedars of Lebanon were delivered to build Solomon's Temple, along with a highly skilled craftsman with a mother from the tribe of Dan and a father from the kingdom of Tyre (this shows the idolatrous intermarriages of Dan)
 - iv. The gospel's influence is expanding westward from Jerusalem to the coast, throughout the prophetic regions of the OT prophets
 - c. Tabitha and Dorkas are both words which mean "gazelle" or "deer."
 - i. This was not a nickname or another name for Tabitha, but was the Greek interpretation of her Aramaic name, given for the reader of the book (Theophilus)
 - d. The Gospel was transforming people by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - i. Tabitha probably had already heard the gospel from Philip and believed, before Peter ever met her
 1. In fact, she never knew Peter before she saw him post-death
 2. This tells us that Christ Jesus is building His Church through the Church's proclamation of the Gospel *regardless of the presence of Peter or the other 11*
 - ii. Tabitha was known to be a woman of great generosity and kindness
 1. "charitable giving" is the word for "alms", which means that she gave monetarily or in kind to the poor
 2. She was "full" of these good works, and Luke uses the verb form which indicates a consistency and constancy to her kind generosity, i.e. "she was continually giving to the poor."

6. Love Always Honors and Always Hopes
 - a. *It came to pass in those days that she became ill and died. Having bathed her, they placed her in the room upstairs.*
 - b. Tabitha, though a good woman full of honor, got sick to the point where her illness overcame her and she died.
 - i. This is normal. Sickness, illness, disease, weakness, are still the norm for the Christian.
 1. While God does work miracles and restores some paralyzed, ill, or disquieted believers, it is not normal to be rescued from such sufferings.
 2. The church, notice, did not expect Tabitha to never die, though their grief over her death is significant
 - ii. Luke is also revealing that illness or sickness is not always due to sin

1. Sometimes it is, as Paul tells the Corinthians, but even then it is discipline, not cursing (training, not punitive)
 - c. She was treated honorably - they bathed her. This is the cleansing in preparation for death, not for life. They did the same to Jesus' body after they removed it from the cross.
 - i. Consider the love for her that these ones had. Whatever illness which she suffered from, it was probably not pretty, and the filth which it produced would need to be cleaned. This is not a pretty story, it has ugliness in it, because life has ugliness in it.
 - ii. This honor in her death, and the widows' accompanying words, reveal how significant a figure that she was in this small community
7. The Faith of Friends is Powerful Faith
- a. *and Lydda was being near to Joppa. The disciples, hearing that Peter is in it [Joppa], sent to men to him encouraging [παρακαλεω]: "Do not delay to pass through as far as us."*
 - b. Joppa was about 11 miles from Lydda, a distance that the two men could have covered in half a day, and Peter could have even made it there within the day if he had left immediately.
 - c. The two men "*parakleted*" Peter - they came alongside him and exhorted him
 - i. The use of this word helps inform us on what this word can mean within its semantic range.
 1. This has a note of urgency to it, an exhortation combined with a request or imploring.
 2. "You have to come with us now, straight through to Joppa without delay! Come on! Let's go!"
 - d. Why did they request Peter's presence?
 - i. Did they believe that he would raise her from the dead, something which had not been done up to this point by an apostle?
 - ii. Did they want him to mourn with them, to honor her good works so that her renown would be known in Jerusalem?
 - iii. Did they want him to oversee her burial?
 - iv. All of these questions have something in common: none of the believers in Joppa could do anything about Tabitha's illness and death
 1. This shows us that the early Church did not assume that miracles of healing, and certainly not resurrection of one individual, were not expected to be done by all members of the church
 2. Rather, there was a recognition that only the apostles were given the authority for such signs of Jesus' authority in the Church
 - e. The urgency with which they implored him implies that time was of the essence to their request.
 - i. This would not be due to an expectation of resurrection (for who cares how long it takes), but probably due to an expectation of disintegration of the body.
 - ii. It may be, given Luke's description of the widows' words to Peter, that they wanted Peter to recognize Tabitha's great faith and mourn her, too
8. A Servant's Loss is Felt Deeply
- a. *and Peter rose up and went with them, and having arrived, they led him into the room upstairs and all the widows stood by him to weeping and exhibiting undershirts and cloaks to demonstrate [her works], as many as Dorkas had made when she was with them.*
 - b. The word "rise up" is used numerous times in this pericope to describe mundane actions - "getting up".
 - i. The implication is always that "rising up" is followed by actions to accomplish some kind of work
 - ii. "Got up to complete the task"
 - c. Peter goes upstairs to Tabitha's body, and she is surrounded by widows
 - i. The widows were the most affected by her death
 - ii. They wanted to boast of her
 1. "showing for demonstration" all the clothes which she had made while she was alive

2. They demonstrated the tremendous diversity and sufficiency of her works
 - a. “undergarments” is the tunic – a full length garment made to be worn near the skin – a smoother tighter weave
 - b. “cloaks” is the outer garments, or robes, worn outside the tunic – a rougher but more durable garment
- iii. This woman was supremely gifted and supremely generous with her gift of tailoring
 1. The expense of these things would have been demonstrable, as well, showing that she was financially capable and equally generous with what she had.
- d. Peter seems to have compassion on the widows of Joppa

9. An Iconic Authority

- a. *And Peter, having thrown them all outside and having placed the knees he prayed, and having turned to the body he said, "Tabitha, get up!" And she opened her eyes, and the one having seen Peter, she sat up.*
- b. First, this event is told very similarly to Jesus' healing of the little girl in Luke 8:49-56.
 - i. Thus, Luke is expressing that the Church (Peter here) is continuing the ministry of Jesus, just as He said it would - "you will be my witnesses"
- c. Secondly, prayer is the means by which Jesus raises the woman from the dead.
 - i. Like Elijah, when he raised the dead boy back to his mother (2 Kings 4:33)
 - ii. This kneeling and praying is mentioned two other times in the NT: Jesus in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41) and Paul leaving the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:36) knowing there would be false teachers rising among them
 1. Both of these are examples of absolute dependence upon God
 - a. Jesus depending on God to raise Him from the dead
 - b. Paul depending on God to empower the elders to defend the flock
 - iii. Thus, Peter is in absolute dependence upon God to raise Tabitha from the dead because it is outside of his granted authority to do so
- d. Luke describes her resurrection in very direct terms
 - i. See opened her eyes and saw Peter and sat up

10. Jesus Has Authority to Make Life

- a. *and having given to her his hand, he caused her to stand. And having called the saints and the widows, he presented her living*
- b. Again, a pattern of aorist participle followed by finite verbs
 - i. having given her his hand - he stood her up
 - ii. having called the saints and widows - he presented her
- c. Then, standing alone at the end of v4 1 is a present participle: LIVING
 - i. Thus, this is the emphasized word in the passage: LIVING

11. The Purpose of Life is Belief in Jesus as the Lord

- a. And it came to be known throughout the whole of Joppa, and many believed upon the Lord
 - i. John 17:3
 - ii. Note that “many” believed here, not “all”
 1. This is the same response as the Jews who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead in John 11
 2. “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.” (Lk. 16:31)
- b. Here, again, is the purpose: belief in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God
 - i. Jesus is making His name great through exhibiting authority over sickness and death to prove that He is not dead, but alive
 - ii. It is through His Church that this message is passed down, the faith preserved through proclamation of His authority, as was promised long ago