

Acts 9:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

Analysis

And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. This verse records the evangelistic fruit of Tabitha's (Dorcas) resurrection. "It was known" (gnōston de egeneto, γνωστὸν δὲ ἐγένετο) indicates widespread public awareness—miracles weren't performed in secret but served as public testimony to God's power and Christ's lordship. "Throughout all Joppa" emphasizes the comprehensive spread of this news across the entire city.

The phrase "many believed" (polloi episteusan, πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν) shows the intended purpose and fruit of apostolic miracles: authentic saving faith. The direct object "in the Lord" (epi ton kyrion, ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον) specifies that faith's proper object was Christ Himself, not merely belief in miracles. This pattern appears throughout Acts—signs and wonders authenticate the gospel message and lead people to faith in Jesus.

This miracle demonstrated several crucial truths:

1. Christ's power over death
2. the value God places on His servants, including women like Tabitha whose good works testified to genuine faith
3. the purpose of miracles is evangelistic witness, not merely compassionate relief;
4. authentic Christianity produces both compassionate service (Tabitha's ministry) and miraculous power (Peter's apostolic authority).

Historical Context

This event occurred in Joppa around AD 37-38 during Peter's ministry along the Mediterranean coast. Joppa was a significant seaport with a diverse population of Jews and Gentiles. The resurrection of Tabitha, a beloved disciple known for making garments for widows (Acts 9:39), demonstrated the early church's practical care for the vulnerable while also establishing apostolic authority.

The miracle closely parallels Jesus' raising of Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:49-56) and Elijah's resurrection of the widow's son (1 Kings 17:17-24), establishing continuity between Jesus' ministry and the apostles' work. Peter's command "Tabitha, arise" echoes Jesus' "Talitha cumi" (Mark 5:41), showing that Peter ministered in Christ's name and authority.

This miracle occurring in Joppa prepared Peter for his subsequent vision about clean and unclean foods (Acts 10:9-16) and meeting with Cornelius. The evangelistic fruit in Joppa created a receptive atmosphere for the radical message that God was including Gentiles in His redemptive plan. Peter remained in Joppa with Simon the tanner (9:43), a detail indicating increasing openness to those considered ceremonially unclean by strict Jewish standards.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How should signs and wonders function in authentic Christian witness today?
2. What is the relationship between compassionate ministry (like Tabitha's) and evangelistic fruit?
3. How can we ensure people believe in the Lord Himself and not merely in miraculous phenomena?
4. What does this verse teach about God's purposes in performing miracles?

5. How does this account challenge cessationist views that deny God's ongoing supernatural work?

Interlinear Text

γνωστὸν δὲ ἐγένετο καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἰόππης καὶ
known And it was throughout all G3588 Joppa and
G1110 G1161 G1096 G2596 G3650 G2445 G2532

πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον
many believed in G3588 the Lord
G4183 G4100 G1909 G2962

Additional Cross-References

Acts 9:35 (References Lord): And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

John 12:11 (Faith): Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

John 11:45 (Faith): Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.