

# A Woman of Good Works

***Key Verse: “Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.”  
—Acts 9:40***

***Selected Scripture:  
Acts 9:36-43***

## **THIS SCRIPTURAL PASSAGE**

centers on the experience of one of the faithful disciples of Jesus. This disciple, who lived in Joppa, is referred to by two names. Her Syriac name, used by the Jews, was Tabitha, and her Greek name was Dorcas. “This woman,” the account states, “was full of good works.” (Acts 9:36) The names Tabitha and Dorcas both signify “gazelle,” and it was a common practice at that time to give the name of beautiful animals to

young women. The beauty of Tabitha was exemplified by her character. She went about doing good to others, and was especially faithful in helping the poor.

The account then states: “It came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.” (vs. 37) Meanwhile, the Apostle Peter had recently performed a miracle in Lydda, healing Aeneas, who was sick with the palsy. (Acts 9:32-35) When the disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda, which was only a short distance away, they sent for him. Peter was asked to come without delay to Joppa, in the hope that he could provide consolation to

those who mourned over the death of Tabitha. Peter complied and, after arriving at the home, went to the “upper chamber” where Tabitha lie. Those gathered in the room were weeping over the loss of their beloved friend, and showed Peter the many coats and garments Tabitha had made for them—examples of her many “good works.” Peter then sent the people out of the room. Our Key Verse says he “kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise.” She immediately opened her eyes, and upon seeing Peter, she sat up.—vss. 38-40

It is important to note that there is no indication in this account of Tabitha immediately going to heaven when she died. When awakened to life by Peter, she did not relate any wonderful visions experienced during the time she was dead. She simply opened her eyes, waking up as if from sleep. She recognized Peter, and accepting his helping hand, sat up, and was restored to her friends with great joy coming upon all. The same is true in other cases of those who were awakened from death. We refer to the accounts of the raising of Lazarus, the widow of Nain’s son, and Jairus’ daughter, in which Jesus’ stated his intent to awaken them from the “sleep” of death. (John 11:1-44; Luke 7:11-15; Mark 5:22-24,35-42) The Scriptures clearly state: “The dead know not any thing.” “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”—Eccles. 9:5,10

With these statements in mind, we can then understand the prominence given in the Scriptures to the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul states that if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen, and if this be so, our preaching and faith is in vain, we are still in our sins, and our lot is “of all men most miserable.” (I Cor. 15:13-19) However, Paul continues, Christ is risen, after sleeping in death for three days, and also has “become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (vs. 20) Let us rejoice in the resurrection promise to “all that are in the graves.”—John 5:28,29 ■