

36. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tab'itha, which, by interpretation is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did—Joppa, now Jaffa, was the ancient seaport of Jerusalem from which it was distant 35 or 40 miles, according to the road taken. It was 30 miles south of Caesarea where Cornelius was stationed. Tabitha is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew Zibiah (2 Kings 12: 1) and means the same as the Greek *Dorcas*, and the English *gazelle*. The gazelle is a species of antelope distinguished for its slender and graceful form and its soft but brilliant eyes. It is evident that community of goods was not generally practised in the early church for Dorcas found many poor to clothe and feed at her own expense. It is not stated that she was a widow (1 Tim. 5: 10), or a deaconess, and probably she was not rich for she did so much with her own hands (verse 39). She was "full of good works which she did." An inward state shews itself in outward acts. The expression means "devoted to," mind and heart full of the desire to help the needy.

37. And 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—We sometimes fancy that God takes away the most useful just when they are at the highest of their usefulness. There were many persons in Joppa who could have been better spared than Dorcas, yet God's way is always wisest and best although he does not shew it so plainly in every case as in this. Evidently these disciples believed that Peter might be able to bring Dorcas back again. There was strong faith in their delaying burial.

38. And forasmuch as Lyd'ba was nigh to Jop'ba, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them—Rather as in R. V. "entreating him, Delay not to come on to us." It is as though their plea was "we are in sore need and deep sorrow, come and help us with words of consolation or miracles of mercy." Lydda was only 9 miles from Joppa.

39. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber;

and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them—No one could be more prompt than the warm-hearted Peter. He plunged into the sea to meet his Lord, and now he responds to a call from him through these weeping disciples. "It is the house of Jairus over again (Mark 5: 41) but with real mourners instead of hired ones, and almost the same words of power." (Lindsay). Who were these widows? We naturally conclude that these were the objects of Dorcas, charity and the form of the verb "showing" (the middle voice) seems to hint that they had the garments on to which they referred. But it is remarkable that only widows are spoken of, while her good deeds must have visited some who were not widows. Others, therefore, suppose, from the use of the article, "all the widows" that these were the associates of Dorcas in her good deeds. A band of such widows as are referred to in ch. 6: 1, and 1 Tim. 5: 9-11. "Coats and garments" are without the article in the Greek; "which" conveys the idea of "how many," and "made" implies her customary practice. They shewed coats and garments which Dorcas used to make, how many they were. Professor Hall notes the fact that making a coat in those days included not only cutting and sewing but spinning the yarn and weaving the cloth as well. The "coats" were the close fitting inner garments, and the "garments" were the mantles thrown over these. These two with sandals and turban, constituted the entire wardrobe of most persons in the east.

40. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tab'itha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up—This prayer is the essential feature by which the resurrection of Dorcas is distinguished from that of the daughter of Jairus. Jesus without any preceding prayer, took the dead child by the hand, and recalled her to life; but Peter does not do so until he has prayed to the Lord for the miracle. (Lechler). Otherwise it is almost pathetic to see how the disciple copies the Master in the smallest detail. (Lindsay). (Mark 5: 38-43).

41. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called