

# Joppa

“Places in the life of Christ”



*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16*

Joppa, a city on Israel’s Mediterranean seacoast is mentioned in both the Old and New Testament. One day God called on Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach. He didn’t want to go, so he went to Joppa and got on a boat for Tarshish instead. He caused all sorts of trouble on that ship. He didn’t want to go to Nineveh because he didn’t like those people, so he got on the boat and went to sleep. God sent a huge storm and the other people on the boat feared for their lives. They drew straws and decided that the person causing the trouble was Jonah so they tried rowing back to shore. That didn’t work so they eventually threw him overboard! He tried to run away from God’s plan for him, but it didn’t work. Sometimes we also try to run, but God is always there – in both good and bad times.

The story of Christ restoring life to Lazarus is well known, but there is another story when Peter restores life to a woman named Tabitha. Peter had been doing miracles in the name of Christ in a near-by town. Tabitha was a very well-liked person. When she died, many people mourned. Then some of them heard about Peter. They prepared her body for burial, but they also sent for Peter to see if he could help. When he got to Joppa he said to her “Tabitha, get up.” And she did. Many people believed in the Lord because of this miracle. Acts 9:38-43.

While in Joppa, Peter stayed much of the time with a gentleman named Simon. One day when he was praying he saw a vision. The events that followed this vision are often referred to as “God has Broken Through.” Up until that time, the Jews, including Peter, would only eat kosher food. This event not only changed their eating. It was a life changing experience for many people. There had been much discussion among the people as to the differences between how the Jews saw Christ and how the Gentiles saw it. Even some of the disciples were confused and Paul and Peter struggled with it. Many of the Jews had thought that Christ was only for them.

Some of the leaders from Jerusalem heard that Peter was associating with “non-Jewish” people and telling them about Christ. Peter told them that when he was in Joppa he had a vision. A sheet descended from Heaven and it had all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds on it. A voice told him to “kill and eat.” Three times the voice spoke to him. Peter protested. He was concerned because the food wasn’t kosher. Then God told him “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” Then the sheet was pulled back up into the sky. Acts 11:9

After the vision three men appeared at his house. The same voice told him he was to go with them without questioning. They told him they were told “Send to Joppa and get Simon, the one they call Peter. He’ll tell you something that will save your life—in fact, you and everyone you care for.” Acts 11:13

Peter went with them and spoke to the Gentiles that had gathered about Christ. He knew now that the Gospel was for everyone, both Jew and Gentile. He told them “John baptized with water; you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. So I ask you if God gave the same exact gift to them as to us when we believed in the Master Jesus Christ, how could I object to God?” The leaders were satisfied when Peter spoke to them and the Gospel was preached to all people regardless of color, race, or nationality.

This vision in Joppa seems insignificant until we realize that now we are able to hear the message of Christ and His love regardless of our nationality, color, race, or creed. God sent His son for all of us. That also gives us a responsibility to make sure we tell the Good News to all people just as Peter did. We may not see a vision but we can see His love.

I am reminded that many places claim that George Washington was there or that some other famous person visited there. Christ doesn’t just visit. He lives with us every day. He doesn’t judge us by the color of our skin or our financial value, or our social status. We are all equal in His eyes. That is a wonderful blessing. Isn’t it great to know that Christ is here? It isn’t a past tense thing; it is past, present and future.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for giving the gift of salvation to all of us. So many times, we get reoccupied with ourselves, and forget that Your love is free to all of us. Help us to look at other people in the same way You see us as one of Your children. Please grant us forgiveness and Your amazing grace which we don’t deserve and cannot earn. Help us to know that You came because You loved each one of us enough to lay down Your life for us. Amen

1. Think about how Peter and Paul disagreed over the technicalities of God’s love being for the Jews only vs. Jews and Gentiles. Are we ever guilty of thinking Christ came only for us?
2. How can we show that we know we are all brother and sisters in Christ?
3. Why do you think John 3:16 is so popular even among those who do not profess to accept Christ as their Saviour?
4. How did Peter’s vision at Joppa change your life?

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