

Acts 9:32-43 RSV (Catholic Version)¹ “Peter’s Miracles and his accommodations”

“Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda. ³³There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed. ³⁴And Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.’ And immediately he rose. ³⁵And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶“Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas or Gazelle. She was full of good works and acts of charity. ³⁷In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, ‘Please come to us without delay.’

³⁹“So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come, they took him to the upper room.

¹ Prepared by the Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain with “a foreword by his eminence Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston.” Special note: the only difference I find between the text above and ordinary RSVs occurs in the proper nouns. The Catholic Version gives pronunciation and accent symbols, e.g. Aē·nē’ as. Consider another fact that impresses me. Though translators utilized Greek texts, they based this Cath. RSV largely on a Latin version of the Greek texts produced ages ago. The fact that the variations are so slight, even after a translation from a translation, illustrates the reliability of Scripture in the majority of versions. Human pride that leads us to disobeying or disregarding God Word is our main problem.

All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, ‘Tabitha, rise.’ And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³ And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.”

Do you wonder why we chose today’s text from a Catholic version of the Bible?

This Acts 9 text differs little from the Revised Standard Version, which Protestants once used.

A story about the ocean liner Queen Mary partly explains my reason for using this text.

Prior to jet aircraft, people travelled the oceans aboard the Queen Mary and similar ships.

Powered by burning Bunker (heavy) fuel oil, the ship could steam faster than most vessels of its time.

In WWII, the Queen Mary safely transported thousands of U.S. troops to Europe. Its front smoke stack stood 70½’ tall; the third 62’.



The owners sold the QM in 1967, and it became a Long Beach, CA hotel-tourist attraction.

In order to convert the ship, the new owners removed the stacks to access its inner parts.

They intended to put the stacks back in place once they finished revamping the ship.

Things did not go as planned; the stacks collapsed.

They had been repainted many times since its launching in 1936; the steel corroded to nothing.

By 1967, those stacks consisted only of paint.

Something similar happens to the simple principles God gives us human beings.

You know of the original Ten Commandments.

The Lord meant Israel to be God-ruled, so He gave Israel 620 domestic and civil applications of the Ten as found in the Pentateuch.²

About 160 BC, Jewish leaders began "codifying" thousands of traditions they called "oral laws."

The book known as The *Mishnah* contains these "traditions" Jewish leaders bound on others.

As Matthew 15:2 (NIV) shows, Jewish leaders considered those oral opinions to be laws:

The leaders asked Jesus: "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?"

Of principles not found in Scripture, Jesus said:
"Their teachings are merely human rules."³

Churches often make laws that contradict Jesus' teaching; "We know better now," they say.

If church laws or teaching do not conform to biblical teaching, we should be prayerfully wary.

That's a compelling reason believers should read or listen to God's Word every day.

- **Believers should question the Bible basis for all teachings handed down by leaders.**
- **Every adult believer should beware of human religious rules.**
- **Your eternity depends on you making godly, wise decisions.**

Notice how this text begins (verse 32):

"Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda."

We don't know how Peter got to Lydda; whether he walked rode a donkey, camel, or horse.

Norma and I landed at Lydda in an El Al 747.

The Ben Gurion Airport at Lod, near ancient Lydda serves Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.
2019 pic by PeterVanAckeren



² The Pentateuch consists of *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy*.

³ Matthew 15:9 NIV

This Catholic Bible Version supports the truth that saints are living people.

Peter didn't visit the Lydda believers' cemetery. The Bible always applies the word *saints* to living, breathing people; not exceptional departed spirits.⁴

When did belief in sainthood start?

I'm not sure and I doubt that knowing the starting date of that doctrine matters.

What the Scriptures teach about the subject should matter to everyone.

Remember what Jesus said:

"They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules."

The ensuing is posted on the site: *Catholic Answers*.

"Because he is the only God-man and the mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus is the only mediator between man and God (1 Timothy. 2:5), but this in no way means we cannot or should not ask our fellow Christians to pray with us and for us (1 Tim. 2:1-4). In particular, we should ask the intercession of those Christians in heaven, who have already had their sanctification completed, because "[t]he prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects" (James. 5:16)."

⁴ By reading the following, you can verify that *saints* refers to living people in God's church: Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:2, & Philemon 7.

The part I underlined reflects an assumption made by many believers today.

The notion that when Christians die, they go immediately to heaven is popular and widespread. I'm sure my godly mother and dad thought that as well as most of the preachers then and now.

What good people think isn't the issue.

"My son, nothing is worth dying for," urged the priest. "Come off that ledge." "My neighbor took off with my wife," sobbed the disconsolate man. "But that was a year ago," responded the priest. "Well, he called me this morning," cried the man, "and he's bringing her back."

What does God's Word say?

Recall what Jesus said in John 5: 28, 29 NIV:

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned."

Notice where all will be when they hear The Lord's' voice.

Not just some; "all" will be "in their graves."



The Bible teaches resurrection of the dead, not that God gave us immortal souls.

The concept of the soul’s immortality doesn’t come from the Bible.

People have asked me, “Bob, where did you get these strange ideas?”

Before I comment on this, may I say that long ago I hoped that I could avoid duplicating the character of the minister who inspired Emily Brontë to write: **“He was, and is yet, most likely, the wearisomest [sic], self-righteous pharisee [sic] that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses on his neighbours [sic].”**⁵

At the risk of appearing as a wearisome, self-righteous Pharisee, I answer the question about where I get my ideas, they come from my reading of the Bible.

The real question is “From where did the idea of the soul’s immortality come?”

The Bible doesn’t teach it, but many Greeks did. Greek thought prevailed in cities like Corinth and Thessalonica.

Many Catholics and Protestants now live under the influence of Greek philosophy and don’t know it.

Let’s move on to what the Bible says:

When the Jerusalem leaders killed Stephen by stoning, Saul was there cheering them.



As they stoned him, “Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep”.⁶ **What does it mean “to fall asleep?”**

I’ve had a few folks fall asleep at services, but never had to call a mortician.

Saul, later known as Paul, wrote to the church in Thessalonica:

“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”⁷

“Fall asleep” means to die in a good relationship with Christ.

We won’t just remain in the grave or decay to nothingness and be forgotten and lost forever.

The folks in Thessalonica worried about their believing loved ones:

Do they lose their chance for heaven because they won’t be alive when Jesus returns for Judgment?

Paul reassured them:

⁵ *Wuthering Heights*, 5

⁶ Acts 8:59, 60 NIV

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18



“According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.”

Notice the order of events:

- “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God,
- and the dead in Christ will rise first (the asleep ones).
- After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
- And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

Why is there so much confusion about Jesus’ Second Coming?

Confusion occurs because many preachers start with a symbolic description in *Revelation 20*.

They link Rev. 20 with a complex prophecy in *Daniel 7*, and then try to fit the clear John 5 and 1 Thessalonians 4 passages with their speculations.

Greek philosophy adds to the confusion.

That’s what believers did in the Greek influenced cities of Corinth and Thessalonica.

I refer you to 1 Corinthians 15:

⁵² “For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Right now we are perishable-mortal.

⁵⁴ “When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’”

Praise God that in the resurrection, He will, “transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his (Jesus’) glorious body.”⁸

Peter visited the saints⁹ in Israel’s coastal regions previewing God’s power to heal and raise the dead.

He went to Joppa and stayed with Simon, a Tanner.

I leave you with a mystery to solve.

According to the Mishnah, being a tanner was the lowliest occupation among Jews. **Wives of Tanners could legally divorce them with no other cause.**

Why would Peter stay at a tanner’s house?

Praise God for His mighty power and His Wisdom!

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⁸ See Philippians 3:20, 21 NIV

⁹ Next week, God willing, we shall note the Bible’s definition of a saint.