

Women of the New Testament – Lesson 13: Tabitha

John 12:28 **Father, glorify thy name.** Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again.

Did we learn our lesson? Study Questions from Lesson 12 (Sapphira)

1. According to Acts 5:1, who was Sapphira's husband?

Answer: Ananias.

2. According to Acts 5:1, what was the source of their donation?

Answer: They sold a possession.

3. According to Acts 5:9, who did Sapphira and Ananias deceive?

Answer: The Holy Spirit.

4. According to Acts 5:10, what happened to Sapphira?

Answer: She died (Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost).

5. Complete the following scripture:

Psalm 94:11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

True / False

False This world will be preserved forever (REV 20:1 – Old heaven and earth passed away)

False Priscilla was a farm worker (ROM 16:13 - Tentmaker) [Rogue question from Lesson 9]

True Barnabas gave all to the Lord (ACTS 4:37 – Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money)

False Sapphira and Ananias gave all to the Lord (ACTS 5:2 – Kept back *part* of the price)

Extra Credit - In your opinion, are you holding anything back from the Lord, and if so, and what?

Lesson 13: Tabitha

'I'll be back.' – Movie line (The Terminator – 1984) with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In this futuristic movie by James Cameron, the never stopping killing machine known as the terminator, delivers this famous line in this, and each of four sequels to punctuate his relentlessness, indestructible construction, and character (it is used both as a warning and a promise). Oddly, the terminator reminds me of my mother – Somehow, she always knew when I had strayed, and would find a way to make her presence known (a warning of punishment to come, a promise that she would always be there for me no matter what).

The believer can boast the same as our Lord is always with us (**MATT 28:20** – **Behold, I am with you always**), and we will 'be back':

- **1 Corinthians 15:52** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

We can confidently claim 'we will be back' as we know our place with Christ is reserved! Also see (**JOHN 5:29** – **Resurrection to life**), (**1 THES 4:16** – The dead in Christ shall rise) and (**REV 20:12** – The dead standing before God) to learn more about our future resurrection.

In this lesson, we look at the testimony of Tabitha as we learn of her remarkable status.

Who is Tabitha

Even the slightest descriptions can reveal a lot about someone. To start off with, the Hebrew name Tabitha means gazelle – It was common for parents to choose beautiful animals as names, especially for girls. Dorcas is Greek for gazelle (a type of swift and graceful deer). As we all know, what your parents name you rarely represent who you are, but we will see some similarities later in our review.

Tabitha was a Jewish woman living in the port city of Joppa (now known as Jaffe, just south of modern Tel Aviv). This port city is very well known as it is rich in Biblical history:

- A receiving point for lumber from Lebanon by King Solomon for the first temple of God (**2 CRON 2:16**).
- Was the port Jonah used in his attempt to escape the Lord (refusing to obey the Lord's command in ministering to the people of Ninevah (**JONAH 1:3**))
- Used again as a receiving port for lumber by decree of King Cyrus of Persia for the Hebrews to build a house for God (**EZRA 1:1-2/3:7**) which was the second temple.
- Is later used to bring the Apostle Peter to a point to witness to the Gentiles (**ACTS 10**) and is in contrast to Jonah (going in obedience vs fleeing in disobedience).

We do not know Tabitha's actual age (I assume she was 39 because all women are 39!) but we can assume she is not a young woman as there is no mention of a family, and great credit is given to her works (we will get to that). However, there is a description that should cause us to consider our own commitment to the Lord.

A tough act to follow

Acts 9:36 – A love that creates action

(36) Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Tabitha is in a very prestigious group as she is the only woman in scripture to be called a 'disciple.' This is a beautiful testimony for Tabitha, but more importantly, it reveals an attribute of God:

- The role of disciple is not exclusive to a gender

Acts 10:25 – Faith is genderless in God's eyes

(25) Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons

When realizing the Lord sent him to witness to Gentiles, Peter's understanding of God expanded. The Gospel (salvation) is intended for ALL – Not just to free those under the promise to Abraham (Jews).

Matthew 22:30 – All are equal under God

(30) For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

In our glorified state: No he or she – Only we, and all of us in God (**JOHN 15:4 - Abide in me, and I in you**). Different roles in this world, but no difference to God (will be equal in the kingdom of God)

In the context of Christianity, a disciple is one who applies all in their life to the teachings of Christ with the goal of becoming Christ-like (striving to become the example Christ demonstrated). To have the Holy Spirit within you (**1 COR 3:16 - That the Spirit of God dwelleth in you**) is only the beginning as one can strive to be much more, as you actually allow the Holy Spirit to guide you (submit to the Spirit's direction):

- **Romans 6:16 – Choose whom you will serve**

(16) Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

You can choose (even as a believer) whom you will serve

The disciple chooses to be obedient to the Lord (it is harder to be good than to look good).

Tabitha was also recognized for her good works where she had touched the hearts of many with her kindness and her continued expression of faith:

- Not faith in the accomplished works (**ISA 64:6** – As filthy rags)
- But faith in the love of God (**MATT 22:39** - **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**).

Tabitha's works are her acts of love for God through the love of others.

Then something happens

Acts 9:37 – Tabitha's ministry concluded?

(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.

All of us have an appointed time and bring into remembrance the words of Job:

- **Job 1:21** And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Job's statement is to acknowledge the sovereignty of God – Humanity does not establish the will of God, and our condition is temporary (all of this worldly existence will not be brought into the next).

For those of us remaining it is a difficult loss, as it is a part of our lives that is no longer here – A friend, a love, a sharer of burdens (in ministry or labors), and they are not part of this world anymore. But we can have faith:

- **2 Corinthians 5:8** We are confident, *I* say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

As much as we value the gift of life in this world, it is with eagerness we look to life with the Lord.

The will of God

Acts 9:40 – A believer woken out of sleep

(40) But 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.

As Peter was in nearby Lyddia (**ACTS 9:38**) where men came to him to ask his help with Tabitha. Peter then applied his apostolic gift (**LUKE 9:1**) to restore Tabitha to living!

From this, there are opportunities for many Sunday school lessons (apostolic gifts, gifts of the Spirit, the power of faith, the power of prayer, the miracles of the Lord, the miracles of the Apostles, etc.) but we look at a particular aspect – The resurrection of Tabitha:

As a very special miracle reserved to reveal the power of God, There are very few accounts of resurrection documented in scripture:

Old Testament (3 individuals): The widow's son by Elijah (**1 KINGS 17**), Shunammite woman's son by Elisha (**2 KINGS 4**), and a dead man thrown into the grave of Elisha (**2 KINGS 13**)

New Testament (5 individuals) A widow's son by Jesus (**LUKE 7**), Jarius' daughter by Jesus (**LUKE 8**), Lazarus by Jesus (**JOHN 11**), Tabitha by Peter (**ACTS 9**), and Eutychus by Paul (**ACTS 20**).

As 1 of 8 persons resurrected in the Bible, God had reserved a special meaning to the life of Tabitha, that the Lord would be glorified through her life (**JOHN 11:4** - **That the Son of God might be glorified thereby**). In this short life, it is our opportunity to Glorify the Lord while we can:

ROM 12:1 – That ye presents your bodies a living sacrifice)

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Study Questions

1. According to Acts 9:36, what town does Tabitha live in?

2. According to Acts 9:36, what is Tabitha's name in Greek (what does it mean)?

3. According to Acts 9:36, what was Tabitha known for?

4. According to Acts 9:36, how is Tabitha described?

5. Complete the following scripture:

John 12:28 Father, glorify thy _____.

True / False

Reference

T F Men will rule over women in the resurrection

T F Believers can choose not to serve the Lord

T F Tabitha died in an accident

T F Paul resurrected Tabitha in Joppa

EXTRA CREDIT – In your opinion, are you glorifying the Lord in this life, and why or why not?
