

The City of Joppa

By Mark Mayberry

7/8/2012

Introduction

Joppa is an ancient port city located on the central coast of Palestine. Also known as Jaffa, it is now a part of the modern city of Tel Aviv. The only natural harbor on the Mediterranean coast between Egypt and Acco, Joppa served as a seaport for the city of Jerusalem, having significance in both the Old and New Testaments. During the construction of Solomon's temple, Joppa was used by Hiram, king of Tyre, to transport timber from Lebanon (2 Chron. 2:1-18, esp. vs. 16). This port was similarly employed when the temple was rebuilt during the time of the restoration (Ezra 3:1-7, esp. vs. 7).

2 Chronicles 2:1-18 (NASB95) — 1 Now Solomon decided to build a house for the name of the Lord and a royal palace for himself. 2 So Solomon assigned 70,000 men to carry loads and 80,000 men to quarry stone in the mountains and 3,600 to supervise them. 3 Then Solomon sent word to Hiram the king of Tyre, saying, "As you dealt with David my father and sent him cedars to build him a house to dwell in, so do for me. 4 "Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, dedicating it to Him, to burn fragrant incense before Him and to set out the showbread continually, and to offer burnt offerings morning and evening, on sabbaths and on new moons and on the appointed feasts of the Lord our God, this being required forever in Israel. 5 "The house which I am about to build will be great, for greater is our God than all the gods. 6 "But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him? So who am I, that I should build a house for Him, except to burn incense before Him? 7 "Now send me a skilled man to work in gold, silver, brass and iron, and in purple, crimson and violet fabrics, and who knows how to make engravings, to work with the skilled men whom I have in Judah and Jerusalem, whom David my father provided. 8 "Send me also cedar, cypress and algum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your servants know how to cut timber of Lebanon; and indeed my servants will work with your servants, 9 to prepare timber in abundance for me, for the house which I am about to build will be great and wonderful. 10 "Now behold, I will give to your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, 20,000 kors of crushed wheat and 20,000 kors of barley, and 20,000 baths of wine and 20,000 baths of oil." 11 Then Hiram, king of Tyre, answered in a letter sent to Solomon: "Because the Lord loves His people, He has made you king over them." 12 Then Hiram continued, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, who will build a house for the Lord and a royal palace for himself. 13 "Now I am sending Hiram-abi, a skilled man, endowed with understanding, 14 the son of a Danite woman and a Tyrian father, who knows how to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone and wood, and in purple, violet, linen and crimson fabrics, and who knows how to make all kinds of engravings and to execute any design which may be

assigned to him, to work with your skilled men and with those of my lord David your father. 15 “Now then, let my lord send to his servants wheat and barley, oil and wine, of which he has spoken. 16 **“We will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon and bring it to you on rafts by sea to Joppa, so that you may carry it up to Jerusalem.”** 17 Solomon numbered all the aliens who were in the land of Israel, following the census which his father David had taken; and 153,600 were found. 18 He appointed 70,000 of them to carry loads and 80,000 to quarry stones in the mountains and 3,600 supervisors to make the people work.

*Ezra 3:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 Now when the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose and built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. 3 So they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening. 4 They celebrated the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the fixed number of burnt offerings daily, according to the ordinance, as each day required; 5 and afterward there was a continual burnt offering, also for the new moons and for all the fixed festivals of the Lord that were consecrated, and from everyone who offered a freewill offering to the Lord. 6 From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not been laid. 7 **Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and food, drink and oil to the Sidonians and to the Tyrians, to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the permission they had from Cyrus king of Persia.***

The Failure of the Danites

Joppa lay within in the territory that was assigned to the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:40-48, esp. vs. 46). This tribe descended from the fifth son of Jacob/Israel, and was the first born to Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah (Gen. 30:1-6). Dan’s prophetic blessing is recorded in Genesis 49:16-18.

*Joshua 19:40-48 (NASB95) — 40 The seventh lot fell to **the tribe of the sons of Dan** according to their families. 41 The territory of their inheritance was Zorah and Eshtaol and Ir-shemesh, 42 and Shaalabbin and Aijalon and Ithlah, 43 and Elon and Timnah and Ekron, 44 and Eltekeh and Gibbethon and Baalath, 45 and Jehud and Bene-berak and Gath-rimmon, 46 and Me-jarkon and Rakkon, **with the territory over against Joppa** [Heb. Japho]. 47 The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them; for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father. 48 This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.*

Genesis 30:1-6 (NASB95) — 1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die.” 2 Then Jacob’s anger burned against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” 3 She said, “Here is my maid

Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children.” 4 So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. 5 Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. 6 Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son.” Therefore she named him Dan.

Genesis 49:16-18 (NASB95) — 16 “Dan shall judge his people, As one of the tribes of Israel. 17 “Dan shall be a serpent in the way, A horned snake in the path, That bites the horse’s heels, So that his rider falls backward. 18 “For Your salvation I wait, O Lord.

Sadly, the tribe of Dan never lived up to its potential or promise. Their allotted territory stretched from the central highlands to the Mediterranean coast, and included the city of Joppa (Josh. 19:40-46; 21:5, 23-24). Unfortunately, they were unable to retain control of much of their assigned territory. The Amorites retained the coastal plain, and the Danites were confined to the hill country. Eventually they migrated far to the north of the Promised Land, conquering the city of Laish, which was renamed Dan. The tribe’s one moment of glory occurred when Samson, one of their own, judged Israel (Judg. 13-16). Their neglect and failure is also reflected in the Song of Deborah, which celebrates Israel’s victory over Jabin and Sisera, king and commander of the Canaanites. She reproving asks, “And why did Dan remain on ships?” (Judg. 5:17).

The Flight of Jonah

Through the example of Jonah, we are reminded that none escape the commandment of God without dire consequence. Rather than journey eastward to Nineveh, located in Mesopotamia, Jonah went down to Joppa, and found a merchant ship which was sailing westward across the Mediterranean. Paying the fare, Jonah went down into the ship to travel to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Yet, his efforts to flee from God were futile (Jonah 1:1-17; cf. Psa. 139:7-12).

Jonah 1:1-17 (NASB95) — 1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. 4 The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. 5 Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. 6 So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.” 7 Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” 9 He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.” 10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. 11 So they said to him, “What should we do to you

that the sea may become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. 12 He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.” 13 However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. 14 Then they called on the Lord and said, “We earnestly pray, O Lord, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O Lord, have done as You have pleased.” 15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. 17 And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Psalm 139:7-12 (NASB95) — 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. 11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,” 12 Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.

The Raising of Tabitha

The example of Tabitha/Dorcas reminds us of the beauty of a faithful life. An active and energetic disciple, this woman abounded continually with deeds of kindness and charity. After Peter arrived in Joppa, he was surrounded by the weeping widows who had known Dorcas. They showed him all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. Praying to God, Peter raised Tabitha from the dead. This miracle became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord (Acts 9:32-43).

Acts 9:32-43 (NASB95) — 32 Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34 Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.” Immediately he got up. 35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. 36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. 37 And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, “Do not delay in coming to us.” 39 So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. 40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 It

became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.

The Vision of Peter

Through the example of Simon Peter, we are reminded of the universality of the gospel message. While Peter was staying in the home of Simon the tanner, located in Joppa by the sea, he received a vision, sending him to Caesarea to preach to the household of Cornelius. The gospel is for all, Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 10:1-33; cf. 2:39).

Acts 10:1-33 (NASB95) — 1 Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, “Cornelius!” 4 And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 “Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter; 6 he is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea.” 7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, 8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; 11 and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, 12 and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. 13 A voice came to him, “Get up, Peter, kill and eat!” 14 But Peter said, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean.” 15 Again a voice came to him a second time, “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.” 16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky. 17 Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon’s house, appeared at the gate; 18 and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there. 19 While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 “But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself.” 21 Peter went down to the men and said, “Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?” 22 They said, “Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you.” 23 So he invited them in and gave them lodging. And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter raised him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am just a man.” 27

As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. 28 And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. 29 “That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me.” 30 Cornelius said, “Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, 31 and he said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 ‘Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.’ 33 “So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

Acts 2:39 (NASB95) — 39 “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

Conclusion

The inhabitants of Joppa teach important lessons, both positive and negative. Noting the failure of the Danites, let us avoid shirking our spiritual responsibilities. Considering the futility of Jonah’s flight, let us readily obey the commandments of God. Reflecting upon the resurrection of Tabitha, let us be instruments of loving service. Heeding the vision of Peter, let us share the good news of salvation with all who will hear.