

# **The City of Joppa**

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## **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).

## **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.

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).

## **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).

## **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).

## **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.