

What is the significance of Jaffa in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Jaffa-in-the-Bible.html>

Jaffa, known during biblical times as Joppa, is a Mediterranean port city in Israel, about 34 miles northwest of Jerusalem. The city of Jaffa now forms the southern section of modern Tel Aviv. The city's Hebrew name means "beautiful." Jaffa is mentioned throughout Scripture and was the site of many significant biblical events.

Jaffa or Joppa is first mentioned in the book of Joshua during the conquest of the Promised Land. The allotment for the tribe of Dan included the coastal city of Jaffa (Joshua 19:46). The Danites failed to successfully drive the inhabitants out of the territory, however (Joshua 19:47), and Jaffa was not occupied by Israel until the reigns of David and Solomon.

When Solomon began to build the temple and his palace, he used the cedars of Lebanon as lumber for construction. The cedar logs were shipped by King Hiram of Tyre to Jaffa (1 Kings 5:6; 2 Chronicles 2:16). When the Israelites were rebuilding the temple after their return from the Babylonian Exile, they again requested lumber from Lebanon to be shipped to them by way of Jaffa (Ezra 3:7).

Notoriously, the prophet Jonah ran away from the Lord and boarded a ship at Jaffa's port. Jonah intended to head in the direction of Tarshish in Spain (Jonah 1:3). Tarshish was in the opposite direction of where God wanted the prophet to go: Nineveh in Assyria (Jonah 1:2). Despite Jonah's disobedience in sailing the wrong direction from Jaffa, he ended up right where God wanted him, as God intervened and set the reluctant prophet on the correct course (Jonah 1:16-17).

In the New Testament, the apostle Peter spends a significant amount of time in Jaffa (Acts 9:43). While Peter was visiting the town of Lydda, the believers in Jaffa asked him to come to the sea city because of the death of Tabitha (also called Dorcas), a follower of Christ (Acts 9:32, 36-38). Once Peter arrived, he was led to where the body of Tabitha was lying. He prayed earnestly to the Lord and in faith told her to get up (Acts 9:40). The Lord resurrected Tabitha back to life, and because of this miraculous sign, many people in Jaffa placed their faith in Christ (Acts 9:41-42).

While staying with Simon the tanner in Jaffa, Peter received a vision from the Lord commanding him to eat all kinds of food and declaring all foods to be clean (Acts 10:10-16). The Lord's command to Peter to "not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:15) showed two things: 1) the Mosaic dietary laws (see Leviticus 11) had been fulfilled in Christ, and 2) salvation in Christ was extended to the Gentiles. Immediately following the vision, Peter was able to see God's impartiality regarding salvation when he preached the gospel to the Gentile centurion Cornelius, who believed (Acts 10:34-48). Later, when Peter gave his report to the believers in Jerusalem about his experience at Jaffa, they marveled that God had granted salvation not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18).

From being a shipping hub for the cedars of Lebanon, to being the site of some amazing miracles in the apostolic age, the seaport city of Jaffa, or Joppa, has a rich biblical history.