

1916- Acts 5:1-11 ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA

PRELIMS. The Holy Spirit has come and a godly community is established. They **share everything!** Barnabas has come from Cyprus having just sold his house and placed it at the Apostles feet!

WHAT WAS NOT THEIR SIN

What a **wonderful example** we have in Barnabas. He is introduced as a **contrast** to Ananias/Sapphira! The Holy Spirit wants us to know that although the Early Church was excellent, it was **not perfect!**

We also learn: there can function **at the same time** among the same body of believers, the Holy Spirit **and** the Evil One **simultaneously!** ***Satan filled your heart*** [3] – **no one** would have **guessed!** Solemn! In fact it is **when** believers meet together that Satan can be **particularly** active! It was when *the angels* (Sons of God) *came to present themselves before the Lord* that *Satan also came*[Job1:6,2:1]

The big problem in dealing with Satan is you do **not know** you are dealing with him – because he appears different from what he is! *Satan disguises himself as an angel of light*[2Cor11:14] In fact, when you are 'dealing' with Satan you **think** you are dealing with God!

There were **several sins** in this incident! But then **that** is almost **always** the case – you can **seldom restrict** one sin to itself alone. There always seems to be the **need** for another sin to be done! There usually always needs to be a 'cover-up'! Ask **Adam** or **Achan**.

It was **not a sin** that they **held back part** of the selling price – that they did not give the **whole amount** of what they got for their home! What was the crowning sin was that they **said/professed** that they gave **all** the sale price! We stressed last week, that there was **no obligation** to give anything, never mind to give it all – Xn giving is **voluntary**, there was **no law** that they had to give like State taxes!

Scripture makes clear that the property, **and** the sale price, 'was their own' to do as **they** wished. *While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?* [4]! There was **no communal ownership** of property! The assistance that the poor received was **entirely** through the **grace** of believers!

WHAT WAS THEIR SIN(S)

Their sin was **lieing/deceitfulness!** to **lie** to the *Holy Spirit* [3] Note **two things**: (a) Although there was no **formulated** doctrine of the **Trinity** at that time – they knew that the Holy Spirit **is indeed God!** In [v3] you have lied to *the Holy Spirit* but in [v4c] “*You have not lied to men but to God* [4c]! They equated sinning against the Holy Spirit as sinning against God! The Church seemed to know about the Trinity! Socinians, JW’s, Mormons, most cults, have a problem with these verses - they do not believe the Holy Spirit (or Jesus) is God!

(b) When you lie to the **Church**, you lie to God! *You have not lied to men but to God* [4c]! Laying the money at the Apostle’s feet, was giving the money to the Church, and giving it to the Church was giving it to God! God is in the Church **God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God will help her** [Psa 46:5] The Church is *the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth* [1Tim 3:15] The Church **takes the place** of God in the world! The way you treat the Church is the way you treat God. Ignoring the Church is ignoring God. Hurt the Church, and you hurt God! Don’t despise the Church!

The Church has **unique authority** - the authority of **God!** *I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* [Mat 16:18,19] + *if he refuses to listen even to the Church let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector* [Mat 18:17]! *So lying to the Church/God/Holy Spirit their **chief sin!**

But Ananias/Sapphira also **conspired together** to sin in this way! They **agreed** to cheat the Lord! *How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?* [9]! *with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it* [2]! **APP** Wives/husbands are supposed to **help** each other by encouraging each other to do the **right** and the **good** thing! Very often, when one member of a Xn couple feel **weak**, the **other** feels **strong** - and there is a **corrective factor!** That is one of the great **intentions of marriage**. Each party to assist the other in doing good

and turning from evil! As Sol says *Two are better than one* [Ecc 4:9] Disciples are sent out *two by two*. So, companions are a gift to **help** us **serve** God, not to sin against Him. It is very sad when two Xns are **agreed** on sin! But it happens – often! Peter might have asked ‘How could you do such a thing?’ Well, its actually quite easy – if a couple are under a temptation together, it just takes a **suggestion** from one party and there's a **collapse of stamina!**

Then there was the sin of **hypocrisy** – saying something is wrong but of which you yourself are **guilty!** It is **pretending** to be something you are not, for some **benefit** or **glory!** They wanted to **impress** the Church. They wanted to be **seen** as good people who were making a **big sacrifice** – and so they were – but not as big as they pretended it to be. They loved the *praises of men!* You see, many Xns are hypocritical for **acceptance** with the establishment. Cardinal O’Brien is a recent example! It goes on a lot – in Church circles!

ENTER GOD!

Some think that Peter **pronounced** judgment on Ananias/Sapphira but the Word does not say that. *When Ananias heard these words*, the explanation, *he fell down and breathed his last* [5]! It was **God** who took his life away at that very moment. It is God who gives life, it is God who takes it away. We must **not** think of Peter as the **minister of vengeance!** It is the **State** that administers the **sword - vengeance!** The **Church** is the administrator of **mercy**. The Church is **not** in the business of **revenge** - but of **forgiveness/reconciliation/love!** The State **avenges** for God, for God is a God of **justice** as well as **mercy**.

So, it was not Peter that brought about the death of Ananias.

However **great fear** came upon the **whole church** and upon **all** who heard these things [5]! As there would be in **any** gathering of people when people drop dead! Despite the fact that at the **Jerusalem Hospital**, probably recorded on the death certificate '**Severe Coronary Thrombosis**', does **not** remove the fact that **God** had brought about his sudden death and had taken his life away!

Now there is **more to follow!** Three hours later, Sapphira comes in – **not knowing** what had happened! Unable to contact - no mobiles!

Instant burials because of the **heat!** **I would be **surprised** if the **first thing** Peter said to Ananias was *Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?* [8] knowing the dear woman's husband had suddenly died so tragically! Maybe it was. But Scripture does **not** record every single word that is said in incidents. **Only** the ones which **fulfills** the Spirit's **purpose** in recording the incident (which here may well have only been conveying to us, the readers, the **solemnity** and **seriousness** of **lying to God!** On the other hand of course, maybe the Spirit **commanded** Peter to be so **forthright!**

The Spirit certainly **revealed** to Peter that **she too** was to die on the spot! *Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out!* [9] That **seems** to have been the only way she heard her husband had died! It does **not seem** to be very **caring** does it? And yet, **God was** in the **middle** of it! **APP** We have to admit, that **life does** sometimes appear **callous** and **heartless!** We ask, 'Where is God in this?' We just **can't** see God's **hand** in it! On the **contrary!** But friends, God's hand **is** in **everything!**

APP Many people have been **blessed** by reading this account. It has been the **means** of **preventing** them for similar sins! God took Ananias/Sapphira's lives away as a **warning** to those around them at the time – and to **us!** It is a **warning** that God is to be **feared** and not be **trifled with!** Now God **is indeed** a God of love – and love, I believe, is the **dominant** characteristic of His nature. But God **hates sin!** He has **principles**, which, if we break **indiscriminately**, He is **very angry!** He really does hate sin. **Pray** for this hatred to sin!

Ananias/Sapphira - were they Xns? Are they in **heaven?** I think so. This **judgment** on their sin does **not necessarily** mean they went to Hell! They must have had some **spiritual commitment** to the Lord! Not many Xns are able to sell a property and bring a **large portion** to the Church (must have been large else people would say 'Didn't get much for the property!') If their **trust** was in Christ's work of **atonement**, then their salvation was **safely** in **Christ's** hands! Their **sin** did **not forfeit** the work of Christ! This incident just shows the **mag-nan-i-mous nature** of God's **love/redemption!** Sins committed after conversion does **not cancel out** Christ's **atoning sacrifice!**