



SAPPHIRA: A WOMAN WITH A DIVIDED HEART

INTRODUCTION

The early church in the book of Acts was a vibrant church, one alive with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As the believers met in the upper room, they were filled with God's Spirit and empowered for service (Acts 2:1-4). Three thousand were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit in one day (Acts 2:41).

The Christian church was born that day. They turned the world upside down. The early church was known by the unusual love and concern the believers had for one another. They sold all they had and shared equally.

It was in this atmosphere, that Ananias and Sapphira joined the church. Drawn by the sincere love they felt from the Christians, they left Judaism and became Christians. Yet, satanically inspired, together they committed the first gross act of disobedience within the newly formed church.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 5:9).

Name Given to Sapphira

Sapphira . . . a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession (Acts 5:1).
His wife A Hebrew name signifying, beautiful or pleasant. The jewel, sapphire.

SECTION 1 - The Start of the Church

READ Acts 1:1-11.

1. How did Jesus instruct the Apostles before His ascension (vv. 4, 5)? _____

2. What was Jesus' promise to the Apostles before His ascension¹ (vv. 8, 9)? _____

3. What other promise are we given (v. 11)? _____

LOOK DEEPER

DESCRIBE what happened on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). _____

SECTION 2 - The Unity of the Early Church.

READ Acts 2:37-47 and Acts 4:32-37.

In Acts 2:14-36, Peter gives the first sermon of the early church.

¹ ascension: the bodily ascent (going up) of Christ into heaven after His death and resurrection.

1. How did the people respond to Peter's sermon (Acts 2:37)? _____

2. What did Peter say to them (vv. 38, 39)? _____

3. What is said about those who received Peter's words (v. 41)? _____

4. DESCRIBE the attitude and actions of the multitude of believers in the early church (Acts 2:41, 42, 4:32).

5. What was the result of this power on the Apostles and on the early church (Acts 2:43, 4:33)?

6. What did the early church voluntarily do (Acts 2:44, 45, 4:34, 35)? _____

7. What did the early believers do daily (Acts 2:46, 47a)? _____

8. How did the Lord respond to them (Acts 2:47b)? _____

9. Who was Barnabas and what does his name mean (Acts 4:36b, 37)? _____

What did he do? _____

Barnabas is later mentioned many times in Acts, first as an encourager to Paul, the missionary of the early church, then as his co-worker in missions.

PERSONAL

How do you give of yourself to the body of Christ? _____

LOOK DEEPER

What are the marks of unselfish love (I Corinthians 13)? _____

SECTION 3 – Lying to the Holy Spirit²

Sapphira and her husband Ananias were new converts to Christianity from Judaism. They wanted to be known outwardly as loving and benevolent Christians, but they're heart was filled with lying and hypocrisy.

READ Acts 5:1-11.

1. What deed did Sapphira and her husband do (v. 1)? _____

2. What did Ananias and Sapphira decide to do with the money (v. 2)? _____

3. What did the Apostle Peter spiritually discern about Ananias (v. 3)? _____

² Holy Spirit: the Spirit of God, the third Person of the Godhead; God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16, 17; John 15:26).

³ Satan - Hebrew *satan*, Greek *satan* or *satanas* adversary: the chief of the fallen spirits, the grand adversary of God and man; the great dragon, that old serpent, the tempter (Matthew 4:5, 6), murderer, the father of lies (John 8:44), the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), the Devil, the deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9), the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10).

Peter, through the power of the Holy Spirit, was able to spiritually discern what was in their hearts. The sin that Satan moved Ananias and Sapphira to commit was not in not selling all their property, or in keeping part of the proceeds of the sale, but in lying about how much they had received.

LOOK DEEPER

How does Christ instruct us to give Him our gifts and offerings (Matthew 6:1-4)? _____

What will the Father do? _____

How are we instructed to give?

Malachi 3:8-10 _____

I Corinthians 16:1, 2 _____

II Corinthians 9:6, 7 _____

4. How did Peter expose Ananias and Sapphira's lie (Acts 5:4)? _____

5. How were Ananias and Sapphira enticed to lie (vv. 3, 4b)? _____

Before God, who were they really lying to? _____

Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God because the Holy Spirit is God (I John 5:7).

LOOK DEEPER

What do the following Scriptures teach about sinning against the Holy Spirit?

Isaiah 63:8-10 _____

Matthew 12:31, 32 _____ 4

Mark 3:28, 29 _____

Ephesians 4:30 _____ 5

I Thessalonians 5:19 _____ 6

SECTION 4 – Smitten by God

Peter, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, pronounced a swift and severe judgment on Ananias and Sapphira. Sudden death was proof of God's anger on their Judas-like hypocrisy.

RE-READ Acts 5:5-11.

1. What happened to Ananias because of his deceit (v. 5a)? _____

2. How did those who heard about Ananias' death react (v. 5b)? _____

3. What did the young men do with his body (v. 6)? _____

4. How long after these events did Sapphira come to see Peter (v. 7)? _____

5. How did the Apostle Peter test Sapphira's heart (v. 8)? _____

⁴ blasphemy - Greek *blasphemia* vilification against God: malign, continual rejection of the Holy Spirit; hatred of God and that which is divine.

⁵ grieve - Greek *lupeo* to distress, to be sad: cause grief, be in heaviness, sorrow, to make sorry.

⁶ quench - Greek *sbennumito* extinguish: go out.

6. What had Ananias and Sapphira agreed together to do (v. 9a)? _____

7. What pronouncement did Peter make upon Sapphira (v. 9b)? _____

8. What happened to Sapphira (v. 10)? _____

LOOK DEEPER

Does God excuse man when he sins because he is following the wishes of his mate, employer, or other persons of influence? Who are we to follow? How are we to walk (Ephesians 5:1-8)?

What sins are we warned against? Why (vv. 3-5)? _____

What grave consequence will we suffer (v. 6)? _____

WRITE verse 7? _____

Who are we? How are we to walk (v. 8)? _____

PERSONAL

Do you make it a habit in your life to lie to God and His people? How? _____

How has it affected them and how has it affected you? _____

If there is an area of hypocrisy in your life, how does it hinder your walk with the Lord? _____

How does it hinder your relationships to your Christian brothers and sisters? _____

How does it hinder your relationship with your husband or children? _____

PRAY and ASK God to forgive you. WRITE James 5:16 _____

SECTION 5- The Fear of God and His Truth

The Apostles were horrified that Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They, inspired by the Holy Spirit, exposed their deception and the newly formed church was established in the fear of God.

RE-READ Act 5:5-11.

1. What affect did the Spirit's revealed truth of the couples' sin have on all who heard (vv. 5b, 11)?

_____ ⁷

LOOK DEEPER

What did Jesus state in the Scriptures about His character (John 14:6)? _____

How can we have access to the Father? _____

⁷ fear: Godly fear; awe and holy reverence of God.

What do the following Scriptures say concerning God's truth?

John 1:14, 17 _____

John 4:23, 24 _____

John 15:26 _____

John 16:13, 14 _____

John 17:17 _____

John 18:37 _____

Romans 1:18 _____

What did Jesus say to the Jews who believed on Him (John 8:31, 32)? _____

PERSONAL

As you studied this lesson, what has the Holy Spirit shown you that needs to be changed in your life? Do you cover up deception? Do you lie sometimes by omitting details and parts of the truth so you won't look bad in the eyes of others? ASK the Lord to search your heart and motives daily that His truth may shine through in all your thoughts, words, and actions. As you do this, prayerfully MEDITATE on your MEMORY VERSE.

MEMORY VERSE

_____ (Acts 5:9).

Sapphira and her husband lied to the Apostle Peter, the servant of the LORD. The Holy Spirit revealed to Peter that Satan had filled their hearts to lie to God.

Through Sapphira, we learn that we cannot hide our sins from man or God. The Scripture says in Numbers 32:23 . . . *be sure your sin will find you out.* But if we confess our sins to God, He is merciful to cover our sins and forgive us of all unrighteousness.

NOTES: _____

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