

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 17: ACTS 5:1-11

ACTS 5:1-11 | THE DECEIT OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

- Verse 1 –
 - The name **Ananias** is attached to three people in the New Testament.
 - This Ananias, an Ananias at Damascus who helped Paul (Acts 9:10-18), and the Ananias who was the high priest (Acts 23:2).
 - The name means *grace* and is the masculine version of the female name *Hannah*.
 - The name **Sapphira** is a form of the word *sapphire* (the precious stone).
 - These two **sold a possession** just like **as many as were possessors of lands or houses** (Acts 4:34) who were part of the believing assembly. In verse 3 we learn that the **possession** was **land**.
- Verse 2 - Unlike the others, these two **kept back part of the price** for themselves, under mutual agreement.
- Verse 3 –
 - Their sin was a *two-part* issue, the first part was **to lie to the Holy Ghost** and the second part was **to keep back part of the price of the land**.
 - Most lessons on Ananias and Sapphira only focus on lying to the Holy Ghost.
 - Be reminded that the group was preparing for the arrival of the Kingdom of God, and in doing so they were selling everything they had (as Jesus instructed the rich young ruler (Lk . 18:22), knowing how hard it would be for **they that have riches [to] enter into the kingdom of God** (Lk. 18:24).
 - Furthermore, had this couple *not* sold their land, they would have been the only ones in the entire assembly not to do so (Acts 4:34).
- Verse 4 –
 - It would have been better for Ananias and Sapphira to have kept the land and only had one sin than to add to their sin by lying to both **men** and **God**.
- Verse 5 –
 - There is no indication that Peter called for this death, but throughout the account Peter is clearly in charge, both physically and spiritually.
 - A **great fear came on all them**. The word for fear is φόβος [phobos] which can be *fright* or *reverence*, (as implied in Acts 2:43, or explicitly in Eph. 5:33).
- Verse 6 –
 - The immediate burial was likely a common practice among all Jews at that time.
 - Even today, orthodox Jewish burial is done the same day as death.
- Verses 7-8 –
 - Now **three hours after** his wife comes, **not knowing what was done** (a reference to her husband's death, not the mutually agreed upon sin).
 - Given opportunity to confess, she rather confirms the amount she and her husband had agreed upon.
- Verses 9-10 –
 - The couple **agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord**, and Sapphira joined her husband in the grave.
- Verse 11 –
 - Now the **fear** spread beyond the assembly to **as many as heard these things**.
 - Be reminded that the proclamation to the nation was the task, and evens like this were part of the rapid spread of the message (as the following verses will show).
 - Also be reminded that the English word **church** is a later development.
 - There was not separate, non-Jewish, "free from the law" assembly meeting in Jerusalem until many years later.

- The Greek word ἐκκλησία [ekklesia] is simply *an assembly*.
 - The Tyndale Bible (ca. 1500 - the first English Bible from the Greek) uses the word "congregacion."
- Question: Why doesn't God punish sin in the church today?
 - What took place in Jerusalem is clearly beyond the scope of what takes place in the modern church.
 - Has God lost His power?
 - Would these things begin to happen if the church was more spiritual?
 - Popular answers:
 - From "gotquestions" - *God's reasons for bringing about the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira involve His abhorrence of sin, the hypocrisy of the couple, and the lesson for the rest of the church, both then and now. It can be easy today to gloss over the holiness of God, to forget that He is righteous and pure and that He hates sin wholeheartedly. This particular sin of hypocrisy in the church was dealt with swiftly and decisively....Right away, in the church's infancy, God made it plain that hypocrisy and dissimulation were not going to be tolerated, and His judgment of Ananias and Sapphira helped guard the church against future pretense. God laid the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira in the path of every hypocrite who would seek to enter the church...The sad story of Ananias and Sapphira is not some obscure incident from the Old Testament regarding a violation of Mosaic Law. This occurred in the first-century church to believers in Jesus Christ.* (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Ananias-and-Sapphira.html>)
 - From J.D. Greer – "Ananias and Sapphira had seen the activity of the Holy Spirit so closely that *the seriousness of the sin increased...We shouldn't ask the question, "Why did they die?" Instead we should wonder, "Why do we remain alive?"*" (<https://jdgreear.com/blog/5-things-god-teaches-us-in-the-tragic-deaths-of-ananias-sapphira/>)
 - The best solution: *dispensationalism!*
 - In the church-age (which had not begun in Acts 5), we are not expected to sell our lands and bring them to the Apostles. Therefore, the entire premise of this account is unrelated.
 - In the church-age, God is not directly judging nations nor individuals, as He was in the time of the Kingdom offer. Therefore, any direct application to the church today is misguided.
 - In the time of the Kingdom offer, the nation was being offered and beginning to live Kingdom-life, in preparation for the King. In the Kingdom, the King would have full authority, full power, and full knowledge.