

The first four chapters of the Book of Acts amazing things have happened! Luke says this is a continuation of the work of Jesus to seek and save that which is lost! Jesus continues to work through His people the church.

Jesus has given all believers the "great commission." What makes the great commission GREAT - It's the GREAT commission because of the greatness of the One that gave the commission. It's great because of the nature of the mission: the saving of souls and making disciples. It's great because of the scope of the mission — Go into all the world proclaiming the Gospel.

Then in Acts 1:4; 8 we learn of the promise of power from Jesus to His followers, that was crucial to their relationship with Jesus and their mission.

Acts 1:4; 8 ...he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.".... 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

In Acts 2 we saw the church obeying the command to wait in Jerusalem and we saw Jesus fulfill His promise as the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the 120 believers on the day of Pentecost — Then empowered by the Spirit, Peter stood up and proclaimed the Gospel. 3,000 men and women believed the account of what God had done in the sending of His Son to save them.

Authentic Church - Acts 2:42-47 42And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 4 recorded for us the first opposition to the church, Authentic Christianity responded to that opposition. House on the rock - Believers treasured their relationship to each other and as a whole the believers in Jerusalem turned to the Lord in prayer!

Acts 4 ends with radical generosity. People selling their property to meet the needs of other brothers and sisters in the Lord.

36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not

your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” She said, “Yes, for so much.”

9 Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Everything is going well, even in the face of opposition and then Suddenly — Chapter 5 begins with the word BUT, and we come to an event that is absolutely shocking. It is so radical, so shocking, so troubling; let’s skip over this part of the story.

Not going to find any decorations with Acts 5:1-11. We don’t skip over it, we dig into it.

36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Here we are introduced to a fairly major character in the Book of Acts - Barnabas - Which was the name the Apostles gave him, meaning Son of Encouragement.

He was named Joses - But he voluntarily sold his land and gave the proceeds to the work of the church.

Now in chapter 5 we see the positive picture of the community’s sharing is marred by the account of a couple who abused the practice by holding back a portion of a gift while claiming to be giving it totally to the church.

Note: the incident is bracketed by references to the Holy Spirit’s power (4:31, 33; 5:12–16). Here we see a reference to Satan. The Holy Spirit was closely linked to the unity of the fellowship manifested in their sharing. Ananias and Sapphira threatened the unity of the fellowship through their deception (satan inspired).

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But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession: After they saw the great generosity of Barnabas and how well he was respected (name change), Ananias and Sapphira decided they wanted to receive the same respect.

“Kept back” (Gk. *nosphizō*) means “to put aside for oneself, to keep back” in a secret and dishonest way. It is an uncommon word, which was used also in the Septuagint in the story of Achan (Josh. 7:1), who received a sentence of death for holding back some of the spoils from Jericho that were dedicated to God.

“The story of Ananias is to the Book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.” (Bruce)

His wife also being aware of it: Clearly, both husband and wife were partners in the deception. They both wanted the image of great generosity, without actually being radically generous.

3 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?”

God apparently gave Peter supernatural knowledge of what Ananias had done. This spiritual gift, called the word of knowledge, is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

Satan not the Holy Spirit was the instigator behind the couple’s deed, “filling” their hearts just as the Spirit had “filled” the community for witness. Just as the Holy Spirit will put the spotlight on Jesus - Satan will put the spotlight on things of the world - temptations - make them appear bigger, more beautiful, magnified. His sin was claiming to be doing more than he did.

4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

Ananias did not have to give anything. Note that whereas Peter accused Ananias of lying to the Holy Spirit in v. 3, here he says that he has lied ... to God, Lying is characteristic of Satan (see John 8:44) and exactly opposite the character of God, who cannot lie (cf. Num. 23:19; Prov. 30:5; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

His crime was not in withholding the money, but in deceptively implying that he gave it all.

Their sin is imitated in many ways today. We can create or allow the impression that we are people of Bible reading or prayer when we are not. We can create or allow the impression that we have it all together when we do not.

Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? Satan can influence the life of a believer, even a spirit-filled believer, but he can’t do your sinning for you. Ananias had to conceive it in his heart.

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

Acts 5:5 great fear (Gk. phobos). Fear in response to a manifestation of God's presence involves both reverent awe and a healthy fear of God's displeasure and discipline.

6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

Tough youth group gig

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

When Peter asked Sapphira whether she sold the land for so much, she repeated the lie, stating the partial amount the couple had given.

9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

Peter accused Sapphira of testing the Spirit, an expression that echoes OT passages about testing the Lord.

10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

Acts 5:10 Peter informed Sapphira of her impending death before it happened; the note of divine judgment is unmistakable.

This was a time when the Holy Spirit was especially present in the community, blessing it with unity of fellowship (4:32) and the power of miracles (5:12-16). That same power brought judgment to those who by their actions denied this unity and power. Satan was no match for the Holy Spirit.

11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. reverent awe and a healthy fear of God's displeasure and discipline

### **Autopsy of Hypocrisy**

**autopsy** a postmortem examination to discover the cause of death or the extent of disease:

As we discover the extent of the disease and the cause of death we are going to see why this event is so crucial to our understanding of Authentic Christianity and Authentic Church.

The death of this couple speaks to God's great concern for the purity of the Authentic Church. We're going to see how the powerful witness of the Church was not only linked to prayer it was also linked to purity. The Lord used this real, radical and shocking event to purify the infant church and further the advance of the Gospel.

Story starts with "but." This little word is far from insignificant because it sets up for us sharp contrasts - light and darkness - beautiful and ugly - true and false

Ananias and Sapphira stand out as the exception in the Authentic Church, lying hypocrites were the exception, not the rule.

We need to understand what a hypocrite is and what a hypocrite isn't! We get our English word hypocrite from the Greek: hupokrites

**Definition:** an actor under an assumed character

Derived from: Greek word that means: **to speak under a false part**

2 Tim 3:5 NLT They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that.

2 Tim 3:5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

The word appearance = Greek: morphosis

Derived From: the Greek word which means: to fashion.

QUOTE — "Half of the misery in the world comes from trying to look, instead of trying to be, what one is not." It was true in Acts 5 and it is true today.

QUOTE: Weirsbe - We must not think that failure to reach our ideals is hypocrisy, because no believer lives up to all that he or she knows or has in the Lord. Hypocrisy is deliberate deception, trying to make people think we are more spiritual than we really are.

At the root of their lying and hypocrisy was pride. - self-exaltation,

QUOTE: Timothy Keller — Pride is the carbon monoxide of sin. It silently and slowly kills you without you even knowing.

This couple wanted to be seen as being as generous as Barnabas. They wanted to be recognized as giving and selfless. Their apparent selfless and sacrificial service can really be SELF-serving; that is, it serves the interest of their own ego and pride.

**People might deceive others, but they never deceive God.**

Loving the praises of men more than the praises of God is a tremendous danger. This couple PRETENDED to be as spiritual as Barnabas and the others so they might have the recognition and praise of man.

They DID NOT sin by giving a part of their sale. They sinned in ACTING as though it was the whole of their sale for the sake of the PRAISES OF MEN. **Had they been content with the PRAISES OF GOD they didn't even have to sell it;** or they could have even sold it have given a PART of it as the Lord directed them, and **not worried about whether or not they were perceived by the church as being as generous as Barnabas.**

Autopsy has revealed a couple MOTIVATED BY PRIDE. They were also MASTERED BY POSSESSIONS.

The hearts of Ananias and Sapphira were NOT in the same place as the rest of the believers. Remember the term "one accord" (Acts 1:14; 2:1). The word is literally "of the same passion." One great love; one great passion mastered their lives! That one passion motivated the rest of the believers in all that they did.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NLT Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them.

Authentic Christianity, Authentic Church, was all about Jesus!

As a result the early Christians lived with the attitude that the spiritual was superior to the material.

2 Corinthians 4:18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

They were so driven by the reality of things eternal and things spiritual that they were able to have a light touch on things material.

Colossians 3:2 KJV Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

It was in an atmosphere of heavenly mindedness that Ananias and Sapphira chose to look at their earthly possessions as something to be retained at all costs

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

THAT was the atmosphere of Authentic Church! Fellowship, selflessness and heavenly mindedness. Ananias and Sapphira were the anomaly in that atmosphere.

THIS IS SO IMPORTANT — The Holy Spirit tells us that even in its beginning; there were liars and hypocrites in the midst of the church! And The Holy Spirit wants us to know that it's not O.K. It's not O.K. because the church is not built by men. The Church is something built by Jesus.

Matthew 16:18 I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

It is His Church that He bought with His blood.

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Titus 2:14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

NOW WE COME TO THE ACTUAL CAUSE OF DEATH  
CAUSE OF DEATH — God acted in the affairs of His Church.

Acts 5:1-11 tells us that each of us live before, and answer to, the Living God — even as Ananias and Sapphira did. They didn't just lie to man; they had lied to God! They were not in the hands of Peter to be judged — they were in God's. Ananias and Sapphira got to the place where they gave no thought to the divine, the heavenly and eternal nature of Christianity. As we look at these corpses in the morgue of Acts 5 we see a couple who failed to realize that they were in the hands of the living God. Whether you know it or not, you are in God's hands.

The Holy Spirit wants us to know that we are caught in the middle of an epic conflict between two kingdoms that we can't see with the human eye —

One is the Kingdom of Light and Life ruled by Jesus; the author of life; the other is the kingdom of death and darkness ruled by the god of this world, Satan.

The devil was at work in the early church. Satan could not terminate the existence of Christianity and stop the advance of the Gospel by way of the threats of the Sanhedrin. So he hatched another strategy: Wreck the witness of the church by diminishing the purity of the church. Wreck the witness and power of the church by getting it to function on the level of that which is seen, touched and felt. He is still at work today.

The Holy Spirit wants us to see the cost of hypocrisy. He wants us to see that Ananias, whose name means "God is gracious," didn't understand that God is also holy. He wants us to see in Sapphira, whose name means "beautiful," that we can look good on the outside but have a heart that is ugly with sin.

Were they saved? Martyn Lloyd-Jones frames the question and answers it beautifully — "Are you saying that Ananias and Sapphira were damned and that they were immediately consigned to hell?" There is only one honest answer I can give: I do not know, and neither does anybody else. We do know this —

2 Timothy 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

It is conceivable that Ananias and Sapphira were legitimate believers who had allowed their hearts to become so divided that they became liars and hypocrites, and in that state of heart their very presence threatened the purity and power of the Church. It's very possible that God took their lives as a consequence to their sin and for the preservation of purity of the church without their going to hell.