

## ACTS CHAPTER FIVE

### Read Acts 4:34-5:11

1. What may have motivated Ananias and Sapphira to sell their possessions?

*One commentator puts it this way...."they wanted to play in the same league as Barnabas, but they weren't willing to pay the price." Imagine how people made a fuss over Barnabas – they wanted that praise and respect, too, but they also wanted their money. Hypocrisy is pretending to have virtues that you really don't possess. It is presenting yourself as one thing in public, but not living that way in private. Jesus often rebuked the Pharisees for being hypocrites. They loved the praise of people, but their private lives proved that they didn't deserve that praise. God hates hypocrisy, especially among His people. He gave a mighty demonstration of His disapproval in this chapter!*

2. To whom did Peter attribute the deceitful idea?

*What was the actual sin involved here? It wasn't that they kept part of the money. Verse 4 clearly says that they could do whatever they wanted. The sin was the deception. It was hypocrisy. They were testing the long suffering of God. This was one of the temptations of Christ. Compare Matt 4:7. See also Proverbs 6:16-19. Can you give some modern examples that would illustrate their sin?*

*Satan has now moved into the church to cause division and discouragement. God isn't going to allow this baby church to be spoiled so easily by Satan. He takes drastic action to reinforce His point.*

3. In vs. 3, Peter says they lied \_\_\_\_\_

*In vs. 4, he says they lied to \_\_\_\_\_*

*Who did they think they were going to deceive? \_\_\_\_\_*

*This is an affirmation that the Spirit is deity. Peter accuses them of lying to the Holy Spirit and then asks them why they lied to God.*

*God identifies with his people – lie to the church and you lie to me. Did they really think that God wouldn't know what they had done? Did they think that they could just do it and then confess it later and everything would be OK? God knows our hearts and our minds and our motives. His silence and His grace on us today is not the same as His consent.*

4. God's instant punishment was: (verses 5 & 6)

*What was the church's reaction to this? (verses 5 & 11)*

*God's church was new and He wanted to keep it pure. He wanted the church to have fearful respect of His holiness and to avoid a repeat of this action or even this mindset. They were also to be an example for us. Compare I Cor. 10:6 where God says that the people that tested Him and died in the wilderness were an example for us, too. We need to remember that the God who judged Annanias and Saphira so seriously is our God. He hasn't changed. Right now we see His forbearance, but He still feels the same way about our sin. The judgment seat of Christ is coming for Christians and we will all have to answer for our actions.*

*Man is not good at planning ahead even for events in this life. We know for certain that we will stand before Christ to give account of our lives, but we don't plan ahead for that very serious event either. Consider I Cor. 3:11-15. The sins of believers have been forgiven and we will never stand in judgment of them, but God cares very much about how we live our lives. Our works....the way we spend our time....will determine the rewards, or lack of them, for eternity. This is what we see happening in I Cor. 3:11-15. Will you be proud of how you've spent your life when you stand before Him as your judge? Will you hear the words of Matt. 5:21? "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*

Read vs. 12-16

5. *What group of people were doing the signs and wonders?*

*Why was God giving them these powers at this time? Remember that it is the Jews who are primarily seeing and benefitting from them. They (the apostles) were given these special gifts at this time to authenticate their words. This was a time of great transition for the church. They didn't have the New Testament yet. Whose words could they trust? God used these signs and wonders to show the people that He was behind these men and the words that they were speaking. Now that we have the Bible, we know that we can always trust what it says. No new words or revelations are being added and there is no reason for God to show His endorsement with miracles. He has already approved and sealed shut His Bible. It can forever be trusted. John 17:17*

6. *What two results of the supernatural activities are recorded in vs. 13?*

*Why didn't unbelievers dare to join them? No doubt they were fearful after seeing Ananias and Saphira. This church is pure; it has been purged. Those who associated with the church after this incident were truly born again people. Joining with this group of believers might mean being arrested, having to give up possessions, spending time in prison, losing face with the right people or being put out of the synagogue. It wasn't a social club!*

*Consider church activities today. Are we attracting people into the church for the right reasons? What demonstrates to outsiders that we are different....or are we?*

7. *Were many people being saved at this time?*

*The gospel was being preached primarily in the temple and the people who were hearing it and being saved were Jewish. The church was still very Jewish; they were still clinging to the temple. They are believing Jews worshipping their Messiah, but they have no thought of taking the gospel to the Gentiles or changing their Jewish lifestyle in any way.*

8. *Describe the degree of healing power Peter had at this time.*

*Some commentators don't feel that his shadow really did heal; that was superstition. At any rate, they were healed by the power of God.*

9. *What percentage of the sick folk were healed?*

*No one was sent home because of a lack of faith. This great healing power was not evident even a few years later. Compare 2 Tim. 4:20 where Trophimus was left sick. Consider also 2 Cor. 12:7 & 8 where Paul had a physical problem that was not taken away. This is further evidence of God working uniquely because of this unique time in church history. There were mighty changes taking place. God was using miracles of healing to show that He was behind the changes and that the apostles could be trusted. As the New Testament times progress, we see less and less of the wonders. God had accomplished His plan; His church had been established; His word was complete.*

Read vs. 17-28

10. *What were the leaders' reactions to the miracles?*

*Why do you think they responded in this way?*

*The rulers had already decided that if anyone said that Jesus was the Messiah, that person would be put out of the synagogue. See John 9:22 and John 16:22. If they had repented and been saved it would have been very humbling, humiliating, dangerous and they would have had to admit to their mistakes. Pride kept them from receiving the gospel and being saved.*

11. *How were the men released from prison?*

*The passage seems to indicate that all of the apostles were arrested and put in jail at this time. This is the first of 3 miraculous prison breaks. See also Acts 12:6-10 and Acts 16:26. It is ironic that God uses an angel to free them. The Sadducees, who were a part of the Sanhedrin, didn't even believe in angels!*

12. *What directions did the angel give to the released men?*

*They were directed to do exactly as they were doing before. God was pleased with these*

*men. They were doing the ministry exactly as He wanted them to.*

13. *How did the apostles respond to the angel's directions?*

*Early the next morning they were in the temple preaching about Christ. The council, in the meantime was gathering for their hearing, not knowing that the prisoners were out preaching again.*

14. *What indicates that no one knew of the escape until they actually opened the cell door? vs.23*

*As far as anyone on the outside could tell, nothing had happened. The doors were still shut and the unsuspecting guards were still on duty.*

15. *In vs. 24, what concern did the rulers have?*

*Things were getting out of hand – they were losing control. Indeed they were. God was in control and things were going exactly as He planned.*

16. *What were the rulers afraid of in vs. 26?*

*The apostles went along quietly, counting on the Holy Spirit to give them the words to say. There was no revolt or uprising from the people. Notice that the Sanhedrin doesn't even discuss how the apostles escaped. They didn't ask them any questions about that. They certainly didn't want to hear anything about angels!*

Read vs. 29-40

17. *Who did the apostles hold responsible for the death of Jesus?*

*Does God hold leaders/teachers to a higher level of accountability? Consider these Verses in your answer: Jer. 23:30-34, Matt. 23:15, Mark 12:38-40, James 3:1 &2*

*God certainly holds leaders and teachers responsible. To lead people away from God or to give them a false security so that they don't seek God is a very serious offense. God will hold them responsible for their words at the judgment. Consider the responsibility of leaders today in both the church and the nation.*

18. *How is Jesus described in vs. 31?*

*Notice in verse 32 that the apostles and the Holy Spirit were to be witnesses of the things they had seen. No one questioned that they were witnesses. The Sanhedrin knew that these men had been with Jesus and that they had been in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified. The apostles had also seen Jesus after His resurrection. They had many things to witness about.*

19. *How did Peter's words affect the council?*

*Peter enraged the leaders by showing them their responsibility. They had Jesus killed but God exalted Him to His own right hand.*

20. *Explain Gamaliel's logic in your own words.*

21. *Who else is associated in Scripture with Gamaliel? see Acts 21:40-22:3*

*It is very possible that Paul, who was still "Saul" at this time, was present at the council meeting. Gamaliel was one of the most widely respected teachers in Israel. God used him and his logic at this point to save the apostles from worse punishment.*

22. *What command was given to the apostles by the leaders*

*This was after they had them beaten – probably flogged. A flogging usually involved 39 lashes. The idea was that a person would probably not survive 40 lashes, so this was as close as they could come without actually killing the person.*

23. *What was the apostle's reaction to their instructions from the leaders?*

*They preached daily in the temple and in every house! Reconsider lesson 4, question 8. Did the apostles react as they should have to the instructions from the leaders?*

24. *How did the apostles react to persecution?*

*God released them from prison – why didn't He save them from the flogging? Our personal comfort and happiness is not God's main concern. He will reward us eternally for the things that we suffer for Him now, but His plan at this point was to build the church and carry on the ministry. We'll see His plan materialize as we move through the book of Acts.*