

Bible Studies

Ananias & Sapphira

There are times when church can be quite exciting. There are also aspects of New Testament Christianity that no one seems to pray for in today's church.



Read Acts 4v32-37

It is important to understand the background of this incident.

For various social and religious reasons Jerusalem had far more than its fair share of poor. They were partially provided for from temple funds, believers in Jesus would have been excluded from this provision. The church took it upon themselves to provide for the poor among them.

Is this still important today?

It is hard for us to understand what a major issue this was for the Church. Distribution of food to the poor was the first major internal problem that the Jerusalem church faced and it nearly caused a split. Acts 6v1-7

What does this passage tell us about the attitudes, priorities and practices of the church?

Who provided for the poor? - What kind of people?

Why do you think people sold their fields or houses?

Is there any indication that this giving was anything but voluntary?

The money was laid at the Apostles feet. v37 Those who gave, gave out of their surplus.

What does this imply?

It implies that the money was given to God and that it was an act of worship.

But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us— see that you also excel in this grace of giving. 2 Corinthians 8v7



Read Acts 5v1-11

Was it wrong to keep some of the money from the sale?

If you answered 'yes' you have missed the point of the passage.

According to Peter, who did the land belong to? v4

According to Peter, who did the money belong to once the land was sold? v4

So what did Ananias and Sapphira do wrong?

They did several things wrong but basically it was deceit. They lied. They pretended to give all the money when in fact they kept some. If they had said, "*here is half the money*", they would have done nothing wrong.

Were their actions premeditated? v7b

Why do you think they pretended it was the whole amount of money?

Were they trying to please God or man?

This was a kind of hypocrisy. They wanted praise from man. They treated the church with contempt. They were phonies

Are money and faith always hostile to each other?

Who did they lie to?

What does this mean?

What does Peter attribute this deception to?

Does this mean it was not Ananias fault?

What does it mean? 1 Peter 5v8



Ananias failed to recognise two spiritual forces at work in the church.

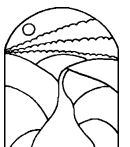
Failed to recognise the Holy Spirit.

Failed to recognise the enemy.

How is the enemy at work within the church?

In what way did he fail to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit?

In what way did he fail to recognise the work of the enemy?



Ananias and Sapphira must have had some strange ideas about church and some strange ideas about God. They were only concerned with external things and how people saw them. Not with what God saw. It reminds us of the danger of putting up a front when the reality is missing. Where were their devotion and commitment to God? They had gone hollow. I wonder how long it had been like this?



Do you think Ananias was like people today who go to church for the sake of appearances?

Many go through patches when we do the externals of the faith but our love for the Lord has waned.

What are the dangers of such times?

What should we do when they happen?

What dangers are there for the Church when people within it start to see it as a secular institution?

Would you say Ananias and Sapphira were lax in their attitude towards God?

What was their attitude towards God?

1 Samuel 16v7, John 7v24 Matthew 6v3

How did Peter know Ananias was lying?

As I understand it, Peter exercised the spiritual gift of the word of knowledge.

Who struck Ananias down, Peter or God?

Do you think Peter knew what was going to happen?

This was clearly God's action. He is judge of the earth and he has the right to judge and punish us. In the end we will all be judged for our action. The Bible speaks of Temporal judgement (judgement now, 2 Peter 2v9) and Eternal judgement, (after death, 2 Cor 5v10, Heb 9v27)

There is nothing unusual about the speed of the burial, It is consistent with contemporary Jewish practice and a hot climate. Even today in Jerusalem, because it is a holy city corpses may not be kept in the city over night, they must be buried or removed.

Why did Peter question Sapphira as he did?

We are all individually responsible for our actions. Sapphira would not be judged for Ananias' sin, only for her own. He gave her a chance to repent.

If she had come clean, would she have been struck down?

No, she would not have.

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12
O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. Psalm 139:1-2*

What does it mean to *test the Spirit* mean? Deut 6:16, Psa 78v18,56, Acts 15v10
I think it includes deliberately doing something against God's will.

Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who was judged in a similar way?

There are many; Achan, Judges 7; Uzzah 2 Sam 6 and Uzziah 2 Chr 26v19 stand out.

Many people commit sins that are far worse and get away with them.

Why did God judge Ananias and Sapphira so harshly?

Clearly God was making an example of them.

He was protecting the churches unity, holiness and purpose.

He was protecting the integrity and spirituality of the church.

For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17

The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. 1 Timothy 5:24



What message did God want to get across?

What does this tell us about the way we should give?

What does this passage tell us about the nature of God?

What would happen if this occurred in our church on Sunday?

What was the effect of this miracle on the church and the community? v11-14