

ANANIAS AND SAPHIRA
A CASE OF SIN IN THE CHURCH
 Acts 5:1-11

Every noble movement attracts some who are not so noble. So of the church. But I believe the incident recorded in these verses is just another evidence of the inspiration of the Bible. Had the Bible been a human production it likely would not have revealed this embarrassing case of sin in the church at Jerusalem.

As embarrassing as this incident must have been to the early church, there are a number of very valuable lessons to be learned therefrom. Notice some of them with me.

DISCUSSION

I. SIN IN THE CHURCH DID NOT DISPROVE ITS DIVINITY.

- A. The church is perfect from the divine standpoint, but it is made up of imperfect humans.
- B. Its plan of organization is divine and, therefore, perfect, but it is organized with imperfect humans.
- C. Its system of worship is divine, and, therefore, perfect, but the worshipers are human and imperfect.
- D. There is always room for improvement on the human side, but it is a mistake to try to improve on the divine side.
- E. If some living today had been present in Jerusalem when this incident occurred, they would have used this to argue that the Jerusalem church was not the church built by Jesus. But it was.

II. ANANIAS AND SAPHIRA MADE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING GOD IS LIKE MAN.

- A. Man can be deceived, but not God. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8).
- B. Man may be bribed, but not God.
 - 1. First Samuel 8 tells us Samuel's sons took bribes and perverted judgment.
 - 2. Judas took a bribe to betray the Lord.
 - 3. Soldiers were bribed to say the disciples stole the body of Jesus (Matthew 28:12-15).
 - 4. But God cannot be bribed. He refused to look the other way when Ananias and Saphira gave him a gift. No matter how great the gift, it cannot cause God to turn his head when we fail in our responsibility.
- C. One may hide from man, but not from God.
 - 1. Psalms 139:7-12: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."
 - 2. When King Ahab went into battle against the inhabitants of Ramoth in Gilead, he disguised himself so that no one would know he was the king of Israel. But in the

battle, one of the soldiers in the enemy's army drew a bow "at a venture" and the arrow found a crack in Ahab's armor. He hid from man, but not God. (See I Kings 22.)

D. Some today have made the mistake of thinking God is like man. Instead of submitting to him, they have decided what God should require, and have given him that. In their plans of salvation, their worship, and the like.

III. SIN MUST BE DEALT WITH.

A. Some choose simply to ignore or overlook sin in the church. Preachers prefer not to mention such things as dancing, immodest apparel, social drinking, cursing, unscriptural divorce, and the like.

B. Some actually are lifted up with pride by their tolerance of sin. This is what was taking place at Corinth in connection with the case of the man who had taken his father's wife.

1. "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (I Corinthians 5:2).

2. Verse 6: "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

3. One preacher said, "We are not going to go to the courthouse to see why people are divorced."

4. An elder, when warned about a known false teacher who was coming to preach to his congregation to preach, said, "We do not concern ourselves with brotherhood quarrels." Proud of their tolerance of sin and false doctrine.

C. The inspired apostle Peter knew that sin must be dealt with.

1. Every effort must be made to get the offender to repent. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

2. If the offender persists in sin, then he must be withdrawn from. Some may think that sort of drastic, but it is not as drastic as what the Holy Ghost and Peter did with Ananias and Saphira.

IV. EVERY VALUABLE THING HAS ITS COUNTERFEIT

A. In the preceding chapter we read about Barnabas and others who sold land and houses, and brought the proceeds from those sales and laid them at the feet of the apostles. That was a valuable thing, and so it is now counterfeited by Ananias and Saphira.

B. There is one true God, and many false gods. "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)" (I Corinthians 8:5).

C. True Christ and false Christs. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24).

D. One Holy Spirit vs. false spirits. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

E. True apostles vs. false apostles. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (II Corinthians 11:13).

F. True teachers vs. false. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (II Peter 2:1).

G. True gospel vs. false. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the

grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9). (Book of Mormon.)

H.True church vs. false. "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

I.True worship vs. false. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

J.True baptism vs. false. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:1-5).

V.SIN MAY BE CONNECTED WITH A GOOD THING.

A.What was being done was good, but what Ananias and Saphira did was a sin.

B.Look what Paul said about the Lord's Supper: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (I Corinthians 11:29).

C.Sometimes one becomes involved in fund-raising activities for good projects, but often these fund-raising activities involve gambling--buying and selling chances.

D.Paul wrote, "Let not then your good be evil spoken of" (Romans 14:16).

CONCLUSION

Just as the Bible furnishes us examples that are to be imitated, it also furnishes some examples that serve as warnings against certain things. Such is this example.

But notice: Despite the hypocrisy of Ananias and Saphira, in order to please the Lord while here on earth and go to heaven when life was over, people still had to become members of the church Ananias and Saphira belonged to. That is the church one becomes a member of when he obeys the gospel of Christ.